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Gentle heart

a heart-opening vinyasa flow sequence

CHILD'S POSE

why does it feel so good?

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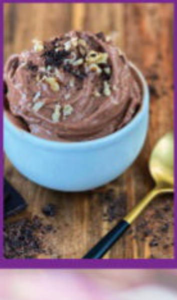

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- Amazing Spaces - Yoga Cabin
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- Fiona Klonarides, founder, The Beauty Shortlist.

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OM Magazine
Issue 141, May 2023

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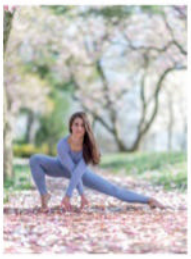

On the cover:
Yogi: Ivana Horecny
IG: @yoga_with_ivana

Photographer: Wanda Bogacka-Plucinski
IG: @wanda.photography

Welcome

Welcome to our May issue.

Inside this month, we've got everything you need to keep you inspired both on and off the mat, from yoga sequences, insight and wisdom, through to nourishing recipes, travel ideas and even some cool new yoga kit for an added boost!

One of the great things about yoga is the sheer diversity on offer. Take a look at some of the popular styles featured in this issue if you're looking to try something new. Here, you'll find everything from SUP Yoga through to Menopause Yoga and plenty in between.

We're also continuing our build up to the 2023 OM Yoga Show at London's Alexandra Palace this October (time to book those tickets!), which will include our inaugural and not-to-be-missed OM Yoga Awards.

This time, read all about Adam and Holly Husler, who'll be teaching at the show — and do check out their fab Honestly Unbalanced podcast, which contains interviews with incredible yoga people who've dedicated their life to improving yours. Be sure to catch them both at the show!

There's lots more to discover inside as well, including teaching tips, self-care essentials and everyday spiritual wisdom, or just soak up the general nurturing, positive vibes that OM likes to radiate through its very pages.

Put the kettle on, make a cuppa and take a mindful moment to explore our yoga world. We're all in this together! Have a wonderful, peaceful month filled with all good things, you unique and brilliant soul-seeker!

Martin

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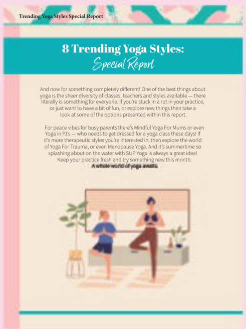
OM in 30 seconds

Gentle heart

A gentle and mindful heart-opening vinyasa yoga flow with Isabel Lankester. Try this simple yoga sequence on the mat for a subtle, refreshing and uplifting heart-opening practice in the comfort of your own home.

A Gentle Heart, Page 32


8 Trending Yoga Styles: Special Report

Try something new! In this special report, we've got eight completely different yoga ideas that might tempt you into a class that you haven't tried before. It's always good to experience something different!

8 Trending Yoga Styles, Page 48

Yoga & wild swimming IN CORNWALL

Love yoga and want to experience wild swimming? Look no further than Cornwall's Fistral Beach Hotel and Spa, where you can experience the ultimate pampering yoga break…and enjoy a dip in the sea.

Yoga & Wild Swimming In Cornwall, Page 94

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Contributors

Maria Oliver

Maria teaches informal, fun yoga classes in Hertfordshire for children, adults, pregnant women and new mums. She strongly believes that yoga is for every body: regardless of age, mobility and fitness we can all benefit from a regular practice. A member of the British Wheel of Yoga, she also writes engaging and imaginative relaxation and yoga books for children to help them explore yoga poses and find their inner calm. Visit: **boxmooryoga.co.uk**

Chris Livanos

Chris is a vinyasa instructor and a professor in the Centre for South Asia at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. After he threw out his back trying to pick a spoon up from the floor, his wife somehow managed to take him to an emergency room, where the doctor said: "You probably aren't doing enough yoga." Thus began the journey. He lives in Madison with his wife Michelle, their dog Rosie Mae, and their guinea pig Lenny. Visit: **panthayoga.com**

Photo: Brooke Daniels

Mary Firestone

Mary is the author of 'Trusting the Dawn: How to Choose Joy and Freedom After Trauma' (Sounds True Publishing), the story of her trauma and survival during the 2017 California wildfires and subsequent 2018 mudslide which took her brand new family home — and her transformation through healing. She's now on a personal mission to let others know there is light on the other side of the darkness of PTSD.

Regular contributors:

Claudia Brown, Paula Hines, Sarah Highfield, Lauren Bloxham, Lydia Kimmerling, Kiki Morriss, Sue Pugh, Isabel Lankester

Words of *wisdom*

> *"The most important point is to accept yourself and stand on your own two feet."*
> *Shunryu Suzuki*

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My *secret* place

Yogi: Julia Mihaylov

Photographer: Gemma Bringloe

Location: Lesnes Abbey Woods, Engand

The photo shows yogini Julia Mihaylov at Lesnes Abbey Woods, sometimes known as Abbey Wood, an ancient woodland in southeast London. It's a place named after the ruined Lesnes Abbey in the London Borough of Bexley. "This place is special for me because it is a beautiful park right next to my house, where I go with my kids and family on a weekly basis," she tells OM. "It's a beautiful wood with amazing hiking routes and playgrounds. It also has the beautiful ruins of the old abbey, which is very unique. You can also see Canary Wharf from the top of the hill. Additionally, I also hold yoga workshops and classes from the little lodge in this park; it's a very special place for me and in my yoga journey." ॐ

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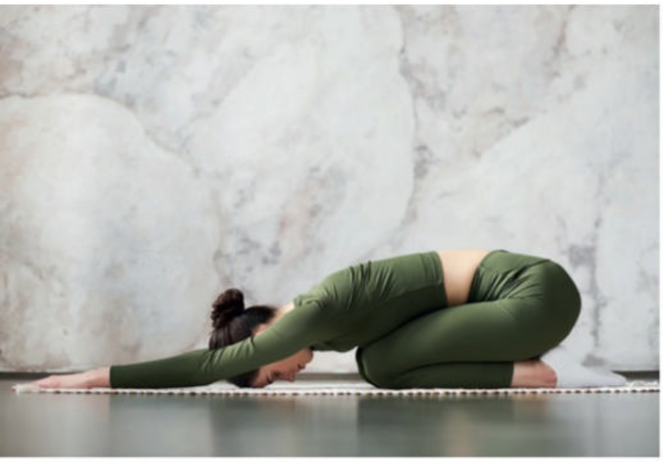

Life-changing

I was made aware of your magazine when you featured Inner Child Yoga School and Vic Tso in a recent issue — and my daughter was quoted in it! My daughter's love of yoga stemmed from my own discovery of the Bikram practice in May 2021. I was such a cynic before I discovered it and never thought that I'd ever commit to this, nor the impact it would have on my life, and so I'd just love the opportunity to urge people to try it. So many more people should be experiencing the same life-changing transformation as I have as a result.
Chloe, by email

Keep in touch

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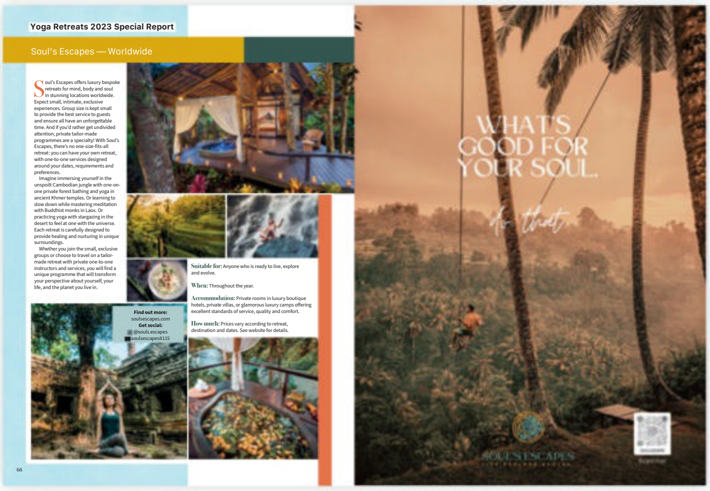
STAR LETTER

Holiday time

I loved flicking through your retreats report in the April issue. I've not been on a yoga holiday since before the covid lockdowns (plus I lost my job during that time) so it was great to browse through all the new retreats and seeing what's out there. I'm happy to say that I've now got a new job and have booked my spot on an amazing yoga retreat in Greece this summer. To say I am excited about this would be the understatement of the year!
Leigh, by email



Yoga Retreats 2023 Special Report

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Soul's Escapes offers luxury bespoke retreats for mind, body and soul in stunning locations worldwide. Expect small, intimate, exclusive experiences. Group size is kept small to provide the best service to guests and ensure all have an unforgettable time. And if you'd rather get undivided attention, private tailor-made programmes are a specialty! With Soul's Escapes, there's no one-size-fits-all retreat: you can have your own retreat, with one-to-one services designed around your dates, requirements and preferences.

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OM Awards

I was really happy to read about your plans to launch the OM awards later this year. It's high time there was something like this in the yoga world and I know that with OM magazine behind it, it will be done in a very tasteful way…so thank you. Hopefully it will help get some proper recognition for all the amazing teachers and studios out there that are doing wonderful things for people day in, day out.
Jo, by email

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YOGA changed my life

Yoga has been the 'loyal friend' to Emma Gwillim over the years. She now teaches others to listen to the wisdom of the body and breath as a way to soothe anxiety and stress

NAME:
Emma Gwillim
AGE: 45
OCCUPATION:
Trauma-informed yoga teacher and breathwork facilitator, coach and freelance writer
YOGA YEARS: 23

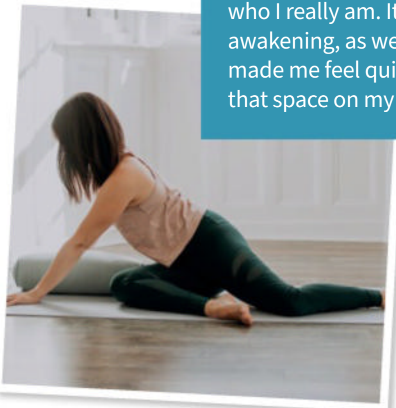
Photos: Mindy Coe Photography (mindycoe.com)

How has yoga changed your life?

It's no exaggeration to say that yoga has guided me to remember who I really am. It has brought me really profound moments of awakening, as well as a bit of unravelling of who I thought I was that made me feel quite lost at times. But always the simple comfort of that space on my mat, just for me. That's the story so far.

Why did you start yoga?

I was a university student that was studying hard and socialising even harder. During the summer break, while I was at my parents' home, they invited me to go to a local yoga class with them. I didn't know much about yoga at all so I had no expectations but, very quickly during that class, felt that I'd found something that felt like 'me'. It was years later though, after graduating and beginning working life, that I started going to a local class — again, as a plus one — and fell in love with the way yoga made me feel. For the years that followed, my practice waxed and waned but there was something about yoga that kept drawing me back. I've referred to it as my loyal friend, always there when I've needed it.



Best yoga moment?

Of many gorgeous moments to choose from, there's one that stands out because of the impact it had on me. I was 11-months postpartum after the birth of my first son when I attended a weekend workshop. I arrived with a minute to spare, apprehensive about leaving my baby, and settled on my mat waiting for the class to start. The teacher, Amanda, welcomed us and the music (Snatam Kaur's Long Time Sun) began to play and, out of nowhere, a river of tears began to flow — unstoppable, silent tears as I moved my body and breathed into all that had been held, so tightly wound in my body over the past 11 months. That class was eye-opening for me. I'd been holding all of that inside of me until I stepped onto my mat that day. It certainly sowed a seed.

Anything else?

It's been a decade since that workshop. In those unpredictable days of early motherhood, and struggling with generalised anxiety, my yoga mat was a source of comfort. My curiosity about how it had this effect on me led me to a 200-hour teacher training as a way to deepen my own practice. I'd not initially planned to teach. My experience of yoga has been like pulling a thread: each time I explored a little bit more, it opened my mind and sparked curiosity again. Sharing yoga as a teacher has also drawn me to the practices that I see have the most profound effect, especially pranayama. Inspired by the workshop that had such an impact on me, I love creating a space for people to connect to their body and breath; it feels like a privilege. My teaching style now — in some way motivated by my own experience of anxiety — is focused on helping people to 'unwind' their body and breath, and somatically release experiences held in the body. Studying a trauma-informed accreditation currently is drawing all of these threads together. The ancient wisdom of yoga is such a gift.

Favourite yoga haunts?

It's the teacher that holds the appeal for me. I've practiced in many less-than-glamorous church halls over the years with incredible teachers — there are so many hidden gems. A small kundalini class in Hereford, a hatha class in Garforth many moons ago, and the coolest community at Om is Where the Heart Is near Huddersfield, have been memorable because of the little details attended to that made them feel so special. My absolute dream spot, though, was practicing yoga on honeymoon at Alila Ubud — dreamy!

Find Emma Gwillim online at: emmagwillim.uk or connect via Instagram @emmagwillim

Your daily dose of Nourishment

5 top tips on getting your daily dose of nourishment by retreat chef and mental health advocate **Satori Harper**

Nourishment is a word that's taken for granted these days, but what does it truly mean? Take it from someone who aims to achieve nourishment in all aspects of life, it can be found in almost anything. I believe that leading a life of balance, fulfilment and good health is what we should all strive for in the short time that we have on this planet. "It's easier said than done," I can hear you say. Well, here are my top tips to help you find the sort of mental, physical, emotional and spiritual nourishment that I'm talking about…and you'll be relieved to hear that my advice won't be just eight daily glasses of water!

1. Practice presence. There's no better way to nourish the mind than being present in the moment. Put down that phone and stop mindlessly scrolling on your daily dog walk or when soaking in the bath. Take the opportunity to switch off the screen, take note of your surroundings and how you are feeling at that time and fully experience all of the five senses you are blessed with.

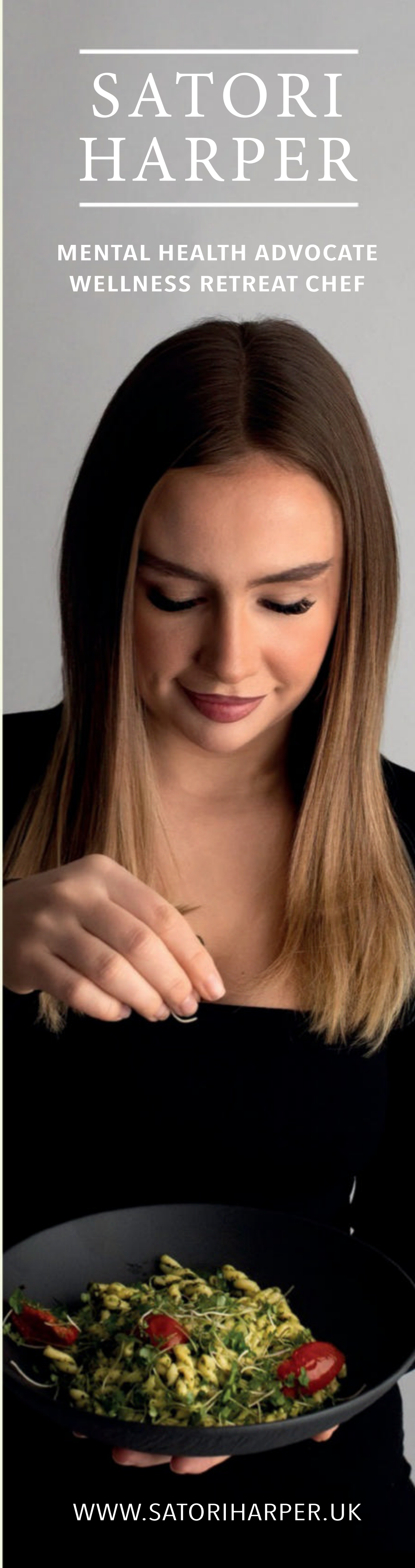
2. Create habits that show gratitude to your body. Express yourself through movement while flourishing through the ebbs and flows of your cycle. Rest when needed, but when you can, strengthen your body with exercises that show it the gratitude it richly deserves.

3. Normalise eating nourishing foods as an act of self-healing love. Quit the diet-fad talks and trends and nurture your body with foods that align with what you need at that time. Identify solutions to your problems through diet and nutritional knowledge then apply this strategy to your wider life.

4. Find an itch and scratch it! Not literally, but by itch I mean something that ignites the desire for self-improvement. It needs to be something that truly feeds your soul and brings you joy. Spend at least a small amount of your day enjoying such things like making a delicious recipe and then, most importantly, eating it!

5. Remember that your environment affects your mood and energy. Surround yourself with people with pure intentions where possible, and have pure intentions yourself. Energy attracts. The right support circle will help you flourish and nourish your dream life.

Connect with Satori Harper on Instagram @satoriharper



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The Happiness Explorer

How to...get unstuck

By Lydia Kimmerling

It's common for people who work with me to be asking the question: What will make me truly happy? Usually, they start asking this question at a point in life where they are fed up in their career but they don't know what it is they want next and not being able to find the answer to this can make you feel very, very stuck.

If this is something you're asking yourself right now, I am celebrating this for you and so is your future self! Feeling stuck and experiencing what you do not want, is the first step in manifesting change. To know what you do want, you have to experience what you don't want — and it's for this reason that I am celebrating this for you.

What's great is that you have the awareness that this is no longer the experience you want and this discomfort is what is pushing you towards what you do want, by nudging you with the life-changing question: What will make me truly happy?

Of course feeling stuck isn't great, but if you can shift your perspective towards celebrating this question (because now you know that it means change is coming, instead of feeling frustrated that you don't have an answer yet) you will move more quickly towards clarity.

And because I have helped hundreds of people find the answer to this question, I can tell you that what's on the other side is more beautiful, more joyful and more freeing than you can imagine. Although on the surface this appears to be about finding a new career, it is usually much more about being true to yourself. In the process of becoming more true to yourself, you discover a greater sense of inner peace and this inner peace gives you the personal power to live your life for you.

If you're asking yourself this question and you'd like to find more clarity and direction so that you can move your life forward, I've outlined five steps below that will help you to get started.

1. Start being true to yourself

When you know that you could be happier but you don't know how to get there, it's likely that you're unknowingly programmed into ideas and beliefs that are not true to who you really are. Make a list of what you are thinking about yourself and your current situation and be unwaveringly honest about which of those thoughts needs to change.

2. Stop people pleasing

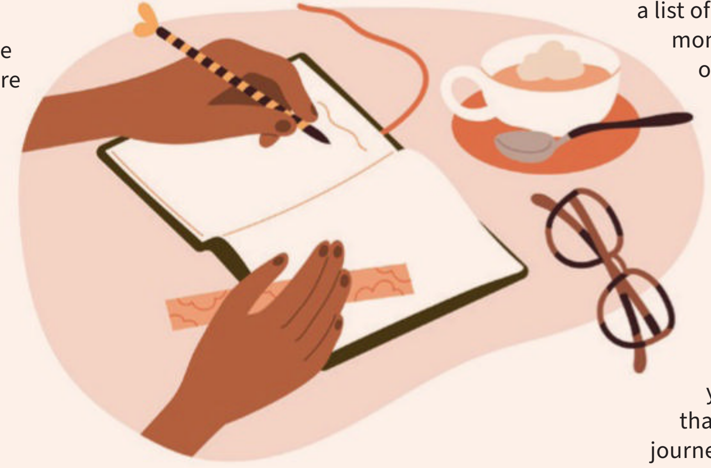
If you are constantly thinking about what other people want and you worry a lot about what other people think, this means that you're not living your life for you. Write an unapologetic list of how you would live your life if you didn't care about what other people thought of you.

3. Get to know yourself

If you doubt yourself often, lack self-belief, or find it hard to make decisions, this means that you are disconnected from yourself and this lack of connection will stop you from being truly happy and sabotage your success. Write a list of everything you like and don't like, plus start taking note of your opinion on things. This is an easy way to start knowing yourself better.

4. Improve your 'selfationship'

Your 'selfationship' is the relationship that you have with yourself — so if you don't like yourself, or you treat yourself unkindly, it means that you need to improve the relationship you have with yourself! Write a list of all of the ways you would like to be treated and start actioning them yourself.



5. Let go of fear

If you're not moving forward because you procrastinate about everything and are telling yourself that you don't know where to start, it's likely that you are unknowingly programmed into fear. Write a list of all of the fears you have at the moment and start to address them one by one by asking yourself: "If I wasn't fearful of [insert fear], I would…" and then take action to overcome each fear.

Your new life is in processing, it's already started to take shape and form. It takes time and it can feel slow, but in the end, it will be the transformation you went through to get there that you most value, so enjoy the journey. 🕉

Which of these five steps is it that you think you need to take? Say hello to Lydia Kimmerling on Instagram @lydiakimmerling where you can find out about her power hour session that will unlock the clarity to move your life forward

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Living the teachings — understanding yoga's everyday spiritual meanings

METTA: LOVING KINDNESS

By Sue Pugh

Metta means 'love' (in a non-romantic sense), friendliness, or kindness: hence 'loving-kindness' for short. It is an emotion, something you feel in your heart. Essentially, Metta is an altruistic attitude of love and friendliness; there is no self-interest involved here. Through Metta we turn away from being offensive, harbouring resentment or animosity of any kind; instead, our thoughts turn towards the wellbeing and happiness of others. True Metta is an all-embracing love that overcomes social, religious or economic barriers.

Metta is also called a paritta: a spiritual formula capable of safeguarding our wellbeing, protecting us against danger, and rescuing us from some of the mishaps and misfortunes of life. In Buddhist countries Metta is held in great reverence with faith in its healing powers. It is thought that as Metta radiates out from us it can calm us, strengthen our minds and even cure disease.

So how can we practice Metta as part of our regular yoga practice? Metta is an active form of meditation where instead of focusing on the breath, we focus on sending loving kindness out into the world, and we imagine that those people in our thoughts are touched by our good will. Metta meditation can take this even further by imagining that whoever the object of our Metta may be (and this includes ourselves) is relieved of their particular form of discomfort, unease or pain as they are touched by the power of our goodwill. Hence, why practicing Buddhists hold this in such great reverence. So how do we practice Metta?

Metta Meditation

Sit in your regular meditation posture with a tall spine. Connect with your breathing and spend a few minutes focusing on the movement of the breath. Notice the physical sensations that accompany this movement, especially at the level of your heart.

When you feel ready, think about someone you care about or someone that needs loving kindness then use the following words either spoken out loud or in your mind:

May you be safe
May you be happy
May you be healthy
May your mind be at ease.

You may also offer yourself loving kindness:

May I be safe
May I be happy
May I be healthy
May my mind be at ease.

Metta is also a wonderful way to practice forgiveness or letting go of negativity towards someone that may have got on the wrong side of you for whatever reason. We know that forgiveness is healing and that by harbouring resentment, in reality we are harming ourselves more than the person that is the cause of the animosity.

Notice any feelings that arise during the practice with an open mind. You might have very strong feelings if you imagine someone you care about who is in distress, or someone you dislike intensely. Let the feelings come and go naturally, without clinging to or judging them. Allow yourself to feel the warm-heartedness that accompanies Metta meditation. It can be a really calming practice if you are anxious about someone that you love. Practicing Metta can really feel as though you are helping them in quite a powerful way.

It is said that those who practice Metta meditation will be able to forgive more easily, have their anxiety reduced, will sleep better and will be able to give and receive love more easily, all very good reasons to head to your mat and give it a go.

Sue Pugh is a yoga teacher and founder of vitabonayoga.com and yogainspecialplaces.com

Gym yoga scene hots up

Hybrid Fitness is expanding its network of gyms, many of which boast their very own hot yoga studio

HYBRIDFITNESS

High-street gyms are upping their game when it comes to yoga.

Hybrid Fitness — which offers its own hot yoga classes in heated studios — is on the expansion trail, setting up new properties and with plans for lots more to come.

Its newest gym is located at the AFC Wimbledon development at Plough Lane, Wimbledon in London.

It offers 20,000 sq.ft. of fitness space over two floors, designed to provide a balance of conventional gym equipment, group classes, a strength and conditioning studio, a hot yoga studio, squash and dedicated personal trainers.

Hybrid Fitness Wimbledon will offer a number of classes at the site delivered by expert coaches, including hot yoga. Other classes include strength training and metabolic interval training, plus combat sessions such as Jiu Jitsu, Krav Maga and boxing.

The company recently signed a partnership deal with double Olympic gold medalist Daley Thompson, who once worked as a fitness coach at AFC Wimbledon.

“The site is fantastic and… will be an amazing place for members to relax, unwind and train,” the former Olympic champ said.

Hybrid Fitness now operates four clubs in Reigate, Sutton, Canary Wharf and also Loughborough in Leicestershire — home to the UK’s top sports university, where hot yoga is also on the menu. There are two more confirmed sites, in Loughton and Putney, as well as additional sites in the pipeline.

“We are on a mission to bring high quality, performance driven training to the community with the goal of positively impacting members’ lives around the country,” said Hybrid Fitness founder, Matt Payne. ॐ

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Beautiful things for beautiful people

Lovendu Journals

Lovendu creates wellness journals for all kinds of situations, from overthinking to self-love and manifestation. The Overthinking Journal is actually pretty amazing: it includes key strategies to ease your thoughts and get you through the tough times. Take your pick also from a range that includes the Happiness Journal, the Anxiety Journal and the Manifestation Planner, among many others. Lovendu was created by Laura Schmidt who began journalling in the hope that it would improve her own mental wellbeing during the covid lockdowns. She soon found that she had more self-awareness, was sleeping better and being more productive and wanted to share the benefits. All journals are beautiful, inspiring and imbued with positivity. Perfect for all yogis and journallers!

£20

lovendu.co.uk

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Positive Energy Crystal Candle

Manifest positive energy with this stunning white sage fragranced candle. A blue frosted glass holder and metallic lid are accented by a scattering of clear quartz crystal chips that can later be reused for a multitude of spiritual purposes.

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bohobeth.com

Aromatherapy Eye Pillow

Aromatherapy Liberty Print eye pillow from Spritz Wellness for yoga, meditation, relaxation and as an aid for sleep. Filled with dried lavender and chamomile to promote calm and relaxation, and gently weighted with buckwheat hull and linseed to allow the pillow to contour to the eyes and forehead. Removable outer cover. As with all Spritz Wellness products, this eye pillow donates profits to Surfers Against Sewage to help keep the world's oceans clean. For every online purchase Spritz Wellness also collects 10 plastic bottles through the Plastic Bank.

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spritzwellness.com

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moceanfitness.com

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Skin Food Lip Balm

If you're a big Weleda fan then this is the lip balm for you. Filled with botanical extracts that nourish your lips with natural oils and waxes, soothing and repairing dry and chapped lips. Suitable for vegetarians and people intolerant to gluten. All Weleda products are also climate neutral through compensation and reduction initiatives. When dry, chapped lips trouble you, whip out the little green tube and put Skin Food Lip Balm to work!

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weleda.co.uk

Voanio Meditation Cushion

Press pause, meditate and escape to the beach: 'Voanio' means 'coconut' in Malagasy, the national language of Madagascar, where these gorgeous, handmade meditation cushions are made. Made with a beautiful palm tree embroidery filled with buckwheat hulls or raphia, that can be removed as needed for easy height adjustments. Bring joy and colour into your practice while making a positive impact on the planet!

£55

ladinayoga.com

Wellicious Yoga Pants & Tank

Living a sustainable yoga lifestyle is fun and easy! Discover the Wellicious cradle to cradle certified, biodegradable and circular Best Yoga Pants and Fresher Cropped Tank in Diamond White with a clean conscience. They are timeless eco-yoga essentials and the perfect choice for yoga workouts and everyday use alike. Wellicious offers ethical yoga fashion at its finest, with all items woven and made in Europe.

£129 Best Yoga Pants

£79 Fresher Cropped Tank

wellicious.co.uk

BODYISM
BUILD + REPAIR
MALE OPTIMUM

Bodyism Male Optimum

Bodyism has created a range of supplements and powders, each providing a powerful baseline of support to help you reach wellbeing goals. The natural supplement range includes seven products including Male Optimum: an empowering, cacao flavoured blend of Tribulus, vitamins, minerals, maca and plant-based. The ultimate energy booster! Another favourite is Serenity: a pre-bed chocolate shake with calming chamomile, hops and magnesium.

£60

bodyism.com

Amazing SPACES

YOGA CABIN

Foxhills Club & Resort
Stonehill Road, Ottershaw
Surrey KT16 0EL

foxhills.co.uk

Foxhills Club & Resort is located in Chertsey, Surrey, just outside of Woking, and dates back to the 1780s when mercurial politician Charles James Fox resided at the estate.

As well as being a popular local golf, wedding and spa venue for the area, the centre also boasts its own dedicated Yoga Cabin. This purpose-built, secluded yoga space, within beautiful woodland surroundings, is a great place to relax body and mind with a full range of classes spanning yoga, pilates, Tai Chi and guided meditation. The yoga class menu is impressive: expect everything from power yoga to pregnancy yoga and all things in between.

THE YOGA CABIN

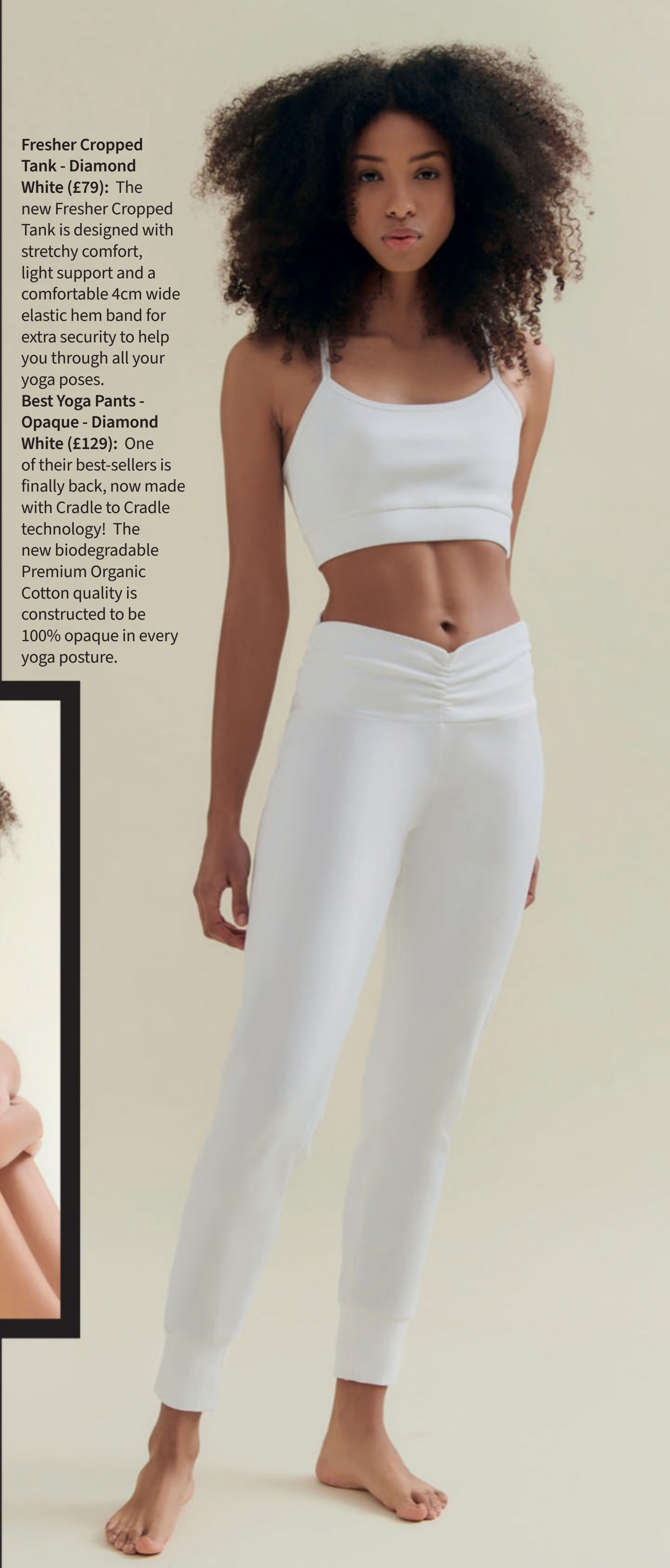
Foxhills has won awards for its gym and spa offering, including at last year's National Fitness Awards 2022. As well as the Yoga Cabin itself, you'll find a spacious gym fully equipped with cardio and resistance machines, plus five swimming pools (yes, five!), and a luxury HealthSpa.

The fitness team also runs regular challenges for members as well as taking part in charity fundraisers – on World Mental Health Day, six members of the gym and personal training team raised over £1,500 for CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably) after completing 10 back-to-back classes in one day.

Non-members and non-residents are welcome on day visits, while there is a range of memberships available, along with accommodation if you're in need of a country escape. ॐ

Wellicious STYLE

Living a sustainable yoga lifestyle is fun and easy! Discover the Wellicious cradle-to-cradle certified, biodegradable, and circular clothing range. Timeless eco-yoga essentials, and the perfect choice for yoga workouts and everyday use alike. Wellicious offers ethical yoga fashion at its finest, with all items woven and made in Europe.



Fresher Cropped Tank - Diamond White (£79): The new Fresher Cropped Tank is designed with stretchy comfort, light support and a comfortable 4cm wide elastic hem band for extra security to help you through all your yoga poses.

Best Yoga Pants - Opaque - Diamond White (£129): One of their best-sellers is finally back, now made with Cradle to Cradle technology! The new biodegradable Premium Organic Cotton quality is constructed to be 100% opaque in every yoga posture.

ABOVE: Control Bra - Caviar Black (£89): This sustainable organic cotton yoga bra made from biodegradable material, gives you all the style and support you've been looking for.

Yoga Shorts - Caviar Black (£99): Stay cool and comfortable through your yoga practice in the super soft, stylish yoga shorts!

New 3/4 Crop Top - Caviar Black (£99): This fashionable biodegradable yoga tank is a fitted active top for all your workouts, featuring a flattering cropped length.
Yoga Shorts - Caviar Black (£99): Stay cool and comfortable through your yoga practice in these super soft, stylish yoga shorts! With a high waistband and hidden pocket, plus relatively long length, they offer total confidence and practicality!

BELOW: (Left) New 3/4 Crop Top - Caviar Black (£99): This fashionable biodegradable yoga tank is a fitted active top for all your workouts, featuring a flattering cropped length. With a comfortable 5cm wide elastic hem band for extra security, it is perfect to combine with the high-rise organic yoga leggings! Sustainable yoga fashion made in Europe at its best!
(Right) Control Bra - Caviar Black (£89): This sustainable organic cotton yoga bra made from biodegradable material, gives you all the style and support you've been looking for. The cut-out back design adds ventilation and flexibility, while providing full support and coverage.

Fresher Tank - Sea Green (£99): This slim fit biodegradable yoga tank top is a timeless eco yoga essential and the perfect choice for yoga workouts and everyday use alike.
Yoga Shorts - Caviar Black (£99): Stay cool and comfortable through your yoga practice in these super soft, stylish yoga shorts!

BELOW: New 3/4 Crop Top - Caviar Black (£99): This fashionable biodegradable yoga tank is a fitted active top for all your workouts, featuring a flattering cropped length. With a comfortable 5cm wide elastic hem band for extra security, it is perfect to combine with the high-rise organic yoga leggings! **Easy Pocket Leggings - Caviar Black (£119):** These biodegradable organic cotton yoga leggings in caviar black are the perfect basis on which to build your yoga wardrobe. With their wide, high waist and flattering and supportive fit, they'll keep you covered in every asana you do.

ABOVE: Easy Colour Block Leggings - Deep Night Blue/Shoreline Blue (£129): Designed for ultimate style and comfort, these sustainable biodegradable yoga leggings have you covered through yoga practice and everything else your day might hold! The thin and high waistband with elastic and pockets on the left side make this organic cotton yoga legging a funky option for your collection! Wellicious believes in slow fashion and this is why it only uses high-quality cradle-to-cradle certified fabrics to make all products last.

New 3/4 Crop Top - Shoreline Blue (£99): This stylish biodegradable organic cotton yoga tank is a fitted active yoga top suitable for all your yoga workouts, featuring a flattering cropped length. **Easy Pocket Leggings - Shoreline Blue (£119):** These biodegradable eco leggings in shoreline blue are the perfect basis on which to build your yoga wardrobe. With their wide, high waist and flattering and supportive fit, they'll keep you covered in every asana you do.

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om yoga show

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Planet yoga

Stories from around the weird and wonderful world of yoga

USA: App'y days

The market for meditation apps is growing fast. It is a global market that is forecast to be worth $6.89 billion by 2028, according to a recent research report by SkyQuest. That represents sustained annual growth of around 42% over the next five years. The company said the growth is supported by the strong take-up of digital platforms for health solutions among corporate and other institutional bodies to help customers, staff and their families thrive in an era of ever-increasing pressure and stress. SkyQuest also projects that by 2025, meditation apps will make up over 43% of the most subscribed categories of healthcare applications in the US market.

UK: M&S mindfulness

Popular high street store M&S has been exploring all things mindfulness lately. It recently partnered with yoga and fitness coach Rosie Stockley, founder of fitness platform Mamawell, to create a quick one-week mindfulness guide filled with simple tips. "Being mindful doesn't require an hour-long practice every day," says Stockley, "mindfulness is all about the small moments and navigating the day in a mindful way." She says there are lots of easy ways to be mindful such as breathing exercises, being outdoors or going on a walk. "Mindfulness is about integrating habits that make you feel good."

Turkey: Marine life

Life at Sea Cruises is accepting reservations for the world's first (and only) three-year world cruise. If that sounds like a long time, don't worry: you'll have plenty of time to practice your yoga moves with access to a state-of-the-art wellness centre, among other features on board the MV Gemini. The voyage, which sets sail on November 1 from Istanbul (with pickups in Barcelona and Miami), will cover more than 130,000 miles, visiting 375 ports across 135 countries and seven continents. But it's not cheap: prices start at $29,999 per year — that makes any yoga studio membership a great bargain!

Saudi Arabia: Yoga education

Yoga is finding its feet in Saudi Arabia's top universities. According to Saudi Yoga Committee President, Nouf al-Marwaai, a number of agreements are to be signed with Saudi universities in the coming months to support and promote the ancient practice. The announcement was made in the capital, Riyadh, during a forum, 'The Role of University Sports in Supporting the Kingdom's Vision in Sports', organised by the Saudi Universities Sports Federation, with the Ministry of Education. "Yoga gives its practitioners many health benefits (for) both physical and mental wellbeing," al-Marwaai was quoted as saying by Arab News.

India: Power yoga

Dozens of delegates at a recent G20 anti-corruption summit in Gurugram, Haryana were treated to yoga as part of their welcome to the country. The delegates experienced India's culture through specially curated yoga sessions, as well as visits to historic sites, cultural events and local cuisine. The summit brought together almost a hundred visitors from around 30 countries as part of the First Anti-Corruption Working Group Meeting of the G20, or Group of Twenty, a collection of the world's most powerful economies, with India currently holding the presidency.

omyoga magazine
Open Class

OM YOGA SHOW
13th, 14th & 15th October 2023
Alexandra Palace, London
omyogashow.com

OM Yoga Show 2023

We're counting down the days to the next OM Yoga Show! Europe's biggest annual yoga event takes place again this year at Alexandra Palace in London. Here's a taste of what to expect in October

Connect with Kino MacGregor

Calling all spiritual seekers! This year, you'll have the chance to practice on the mat with the one and only Kino MacGregor. The Ashtanga Yoga legend has been dedicated to a daily, six-day-a-week practice for more than 20 years, making annual trips to Mysore, India to study with her teachers, the late K. Pattabhi Jois and his grandson R. Sharath Jois.

With over one million followers on Instagram and over 500,000 subscribers on YouTube and Facebook, Kino MacGregor's message of spiritual strength now reaches people all over the world. Sought after as an expert in yoga worldwide, she is an international yoga teacher, inspirational speaker, author of four books, producer of six Ashtanga Yoga DVDs, writer, vlogger, world traveler and the co-founder of Miami Life Centre.

And this year we're proud to say that she will be joining us at the OM Yoga Show! Kino MacGregor will be presenting just the one workshop, so be quick — make sure you book your tickets now to avoid missing out!

ASHTANGA BASICS

Ashtanga Basics Workshop with Kino MacGregor

Take this rare opportunity to practice with one of the top yoga teachers in the world and dive into a detailed exploration of the Ashtanga Yoga method starting with the foundational principles of practice in the Primary Series. Break down key principles and poses in a perfect mix between theory and application. Perfect for all levels, new students will find a warm welcome to this ancient tradition and old students will leave with a fresh look at the lineage and practice.

Sunday 15th October, 2023

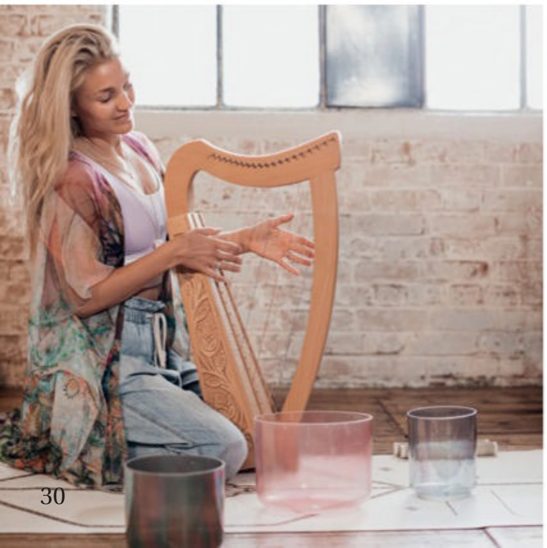
Meet the Huslers

Husband and wife duo Adam Husler and Holly Husler will be teaching at the OM Yoga Show this year. Be sure to catch them at Alexandra Palace in October

Inspirational yoga teacher Adam Husler and blissful sound healer Holly Husler are perhaps the most well-known yoga couple in the UK, working out of London. They've both got yoga and sound healer trainings, and run regular workshops, retreats and courses. You can even find Holly's album on Spotify right now!

Together the Huslers host their Honestly Unbalanced podcast, having open conversations with celebrated yoga teachers and other people who have spent their lives trying to make yours better!

This year, you can catch both of them teaching at the OM Yoga Show in October (tickets available now!). We talked to them recently to get to know them a little more and to get a flavour of what to expect at the show.



Can you tell us a bit about your yoga story?

Adam: I first used yoga to increase performance and recovery as a teenage amateur boxer, then it turned into a way to profoundly improve my mental wellbeing. Then my first 200-hour teacher training was a way to deepen my knowledge, but I had no plans to ever teach!

Holly: I found yoga, as many do, at a time in my life where I felt like I'd lost so much. I'd been living my dream life in a girl band for three years before it all fell apart, and suddenly I had no income— living in London was impossible! I had to move back home with my parents and start again from scratch. Soon after, I broke up with a long-term boyfriend. My friend had just started teaching yoga and invited me along to a class…I was hooked! I cried in so many savasanas as I realised how I'd lost myself over the years too. Yoga brought me home to my true Self.

Tell us about what you are teaching now?

Adam: My vinyasa teaching is fuelled by a fascination with anatomy and a desire to ask 'why'? I'm not interested in making cool shapes for the sake of it, but want to to facilitate the exploration of intention in asanas, helping people find a balance between flexibility and strength; physically and mentally. My belief is that the body is the most tangible access point we have to the universe, and we can have deep spiritual enquiry using the body as a vehicle for that.

Holly: After a few years of leaving music behind and teaching yoga instead, I was eventually bridged back to music in a more healing capacity when I booked onto a sound bath one night in London. It was so transformative that I decided to buy some crystal bowls and book myself onto a training. Five years later, I'm now teaching sound healer trainings myself! Sound healing is where it's at for me now!

Any tips for embedding yoga or meditation into a busy life?

Adam: I'm not an advocate of the idea that your yoga practice can be your walk, bringing up a child, your gym routine, or painting and so on. I think we all need a formal practice, and then we can meet other activities in the world as embodied yoga practitioners. Don't feel you need a 60-minute candlelit practice each day; a five-minute meditation or 10 minutes of mindful movement daily will work wonders.

Holly: Something I always say to my students is: 'peace and calm is so often just a few conscious breaths away'. If you have

Adam Husler

Adam Husler has taught his unique style of non-dogmatic yoga in over 60 locations across 20 countries, fuelled by a fascination with anatomy and a desire to ask the question: why?

Holly Husler

Holly Husler has gone from performing at the London O2 stage to an audience of 20,000 people in her girl-band days, to singing healing mantras and playing magical instruments to seas of sleeping yogis at events, festivals and teacher trainings across the globe.

a busy life, finding your peace doesn't have to be an hour's practice on a mat. It can be simply closing your eyes, breathing in and out deeply and mindfully three times and finding some inward connection there. It's always accessible!

How did you first meet and what it's like being a well-known yoga couple?

Holly: I actually met Adam at one of his yoga classes via a mutual friend. I had greasy hair that day and was wearing lairy leopard-print leggings, and I fell over within five minutes in the front row, ha! I'm not sure which out of those things did it for him but we ended up on a gin and bowling date a few weeks later! We're very 'Yin and Yang' but it works. We balance each other out.

Adam: Whether we're teaching a big conference or a small local class, we try to meet people and interact in exactly the same way. We're eternally grateful that we get to go on some remarkable world adventures as a young family.

You've also built up your own successful podcast. What can you tell us about that?

Adam: On the Honestly Unbalanced podcast we've chatted to over 80 guests. These are all people who've tried to make your life better, including loads of well-known yoga teachers like Tara Stiles, Dylan Werner, Jason Crandell, Radhika Das and more.

In October, you'll both be teaching at the OM Yoga Show in London. What can people expect from your classes at the show this year?

Adam: During my class, we'll dig deep into the lower body, exploring strength, dynamic movement, flexibility and active range of motion.

Holly: From me, you can expect relaxation, a chance to press pause on your busy life and simply receive; a connection to harmony and peace through the healing vibrations and frequencies of my crystal singing bowls.

Any messages to readers out there who have not been to the OM Yoga Show before? What would you say to them to encourage them to visit?

Adam: There are no places that bring the national yoga community together in all its diversity like the OM Yoga Show!

For more information on Adam and Holly Husler visit: adamhusler.com and hollyhusler.com or connect with them on Instagram @adamhusler @iamhollyhusler

OM Yoga Show Workshops

You can practice with the Huslers at the OM Yoga Show this year. Book your tickets online now.

Hip Love...and Hip Hate with Adam Husler

Instead of making pretty, dramatic shapes and following the route of least resistance, in this workshop you'll be moving and exploring your hips with control, strength and integrity. Through a magic combination of dynamic movements, range-of-motion exploration, static poses and mobility theory, your hips will receive 90 minutes of the stuff they need, in all directions; not the stuff they necessarily want! There will be plenty of thoughts and considerations for you to take away to your regular practice.

Saturday 14 October, 2023
14.15 - 15.45
£15

Sound Asleep: Sound Healing Experience with Holly Husler

After a busy week, this is your time to relax and receive. You'll enter a warm, candlelit space with peaceful music, invited to lie down and get cosy with blankets and any props that maximise comfort. After a brief hello and introduction to sound healing, close your eyes and allow your body to fully relax, your mind to quieten and the breath to slow, as you press pause on the world outside. Be guided on a journey of healing sounds and vibrations, with alchemy crystal bowls, magical instruments, and voice. Nothing to do but surrender and allow yourself to travel inwards, back home to your oasis of inner peace and calm.

Saturday 14 October, 2023
16.00 - 17.15
£12

Workshop Tickets available from
omyogashow.com

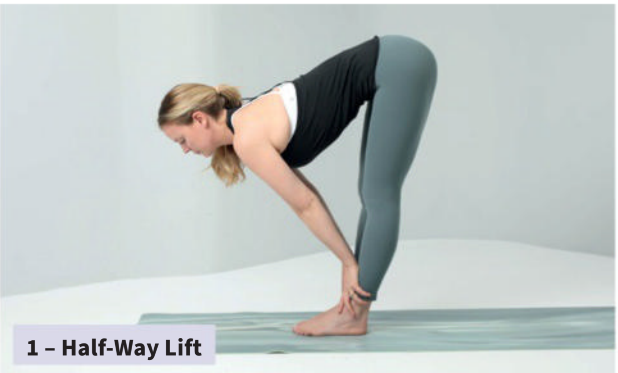
Gentle heart

A gentle and mindful heart-opening vinyasa flow.

By Isabel Lankester

Watch the mini session with Isabel Lankester on the OM website or app, brought to you in partnership with Isabel Lankester Yoga. Visit isabellankesteryoga.com for the full-length class, plus 100+ more on-demand and live stream classes.

Enjoy this simple vinyasa flow to gently coax open your heart. Here we learn how to keep steady engagement through the core as we expand into extension of the spine. During the practice we shall visit some commonly used yoga poses that all gently open up the thoracic spine. Remember to move mindfully, make sure you are practicing on a flat, firm surface and listen to those inner cues. Heart openers often look subtle but can feel quite intense, especially if you are a beginner, so take your time on the mat today. Option to use a strap if your shoulders are feeling a little tight.



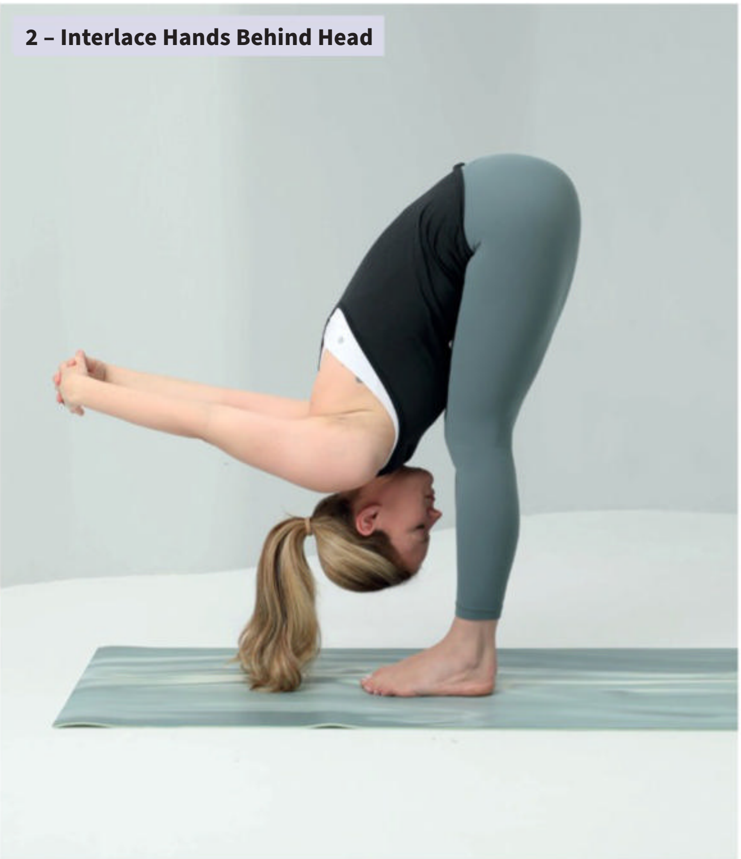
1 – Half-Way Lift

1. Ardha Uttanasana (Half-Way Lift)

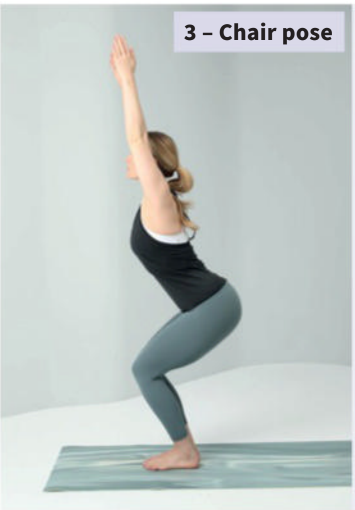
Begin in standing at the top of the mat (samasthiti, image not shown) hands at your heart, eyes closed. Take a deep breath, inhale and reach your arms upwards to urdhva hastasana (upwards salute, image not shown), exhale as you forward fold to Uttanasana (standing forward bend, not shown). Start to inhale towards a half way lift of the spine (Ardha Uttanasana, image 1). Feel your navel draw upwards towards the spine, there is an extension forward of the chest as you lean back into your heels.

2. Interlace Hands Behind Back

Exhale again to a forward fold, rag doll, soften at your knees and allow your hands to dangle just off the ground. Close your eyes and imagine your spine really hanging off your body as you release the back of your neck. Option to use a strap here as you remain in your forward fold but start to interlace your hands behind your back (see image 2). Option to heel toe the feet a little wider as you encourage the hands to fall towards the back of the head. Notice a drawing forwards and down of the heart as your scapula press together. Hold for a few breaths before releasing the hands (and strap) bending the knees and lifting the arms overhead into chair pose (Utkatasana, image 3).



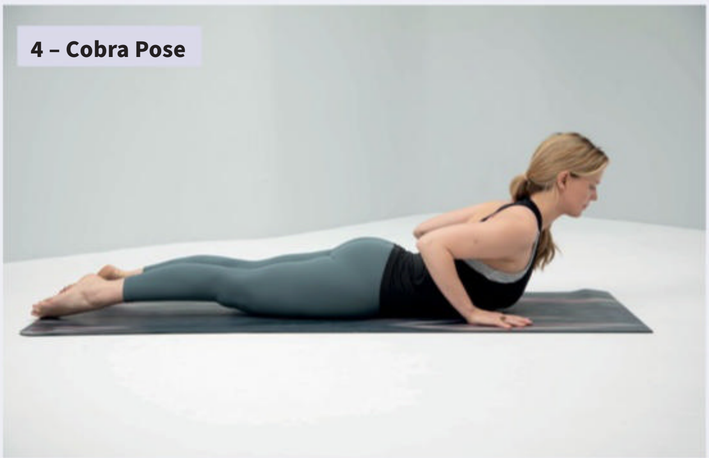
2 – Interlace Hands Behind Head



3 – Chair pose

3. Utkatasana (Chair Pose)

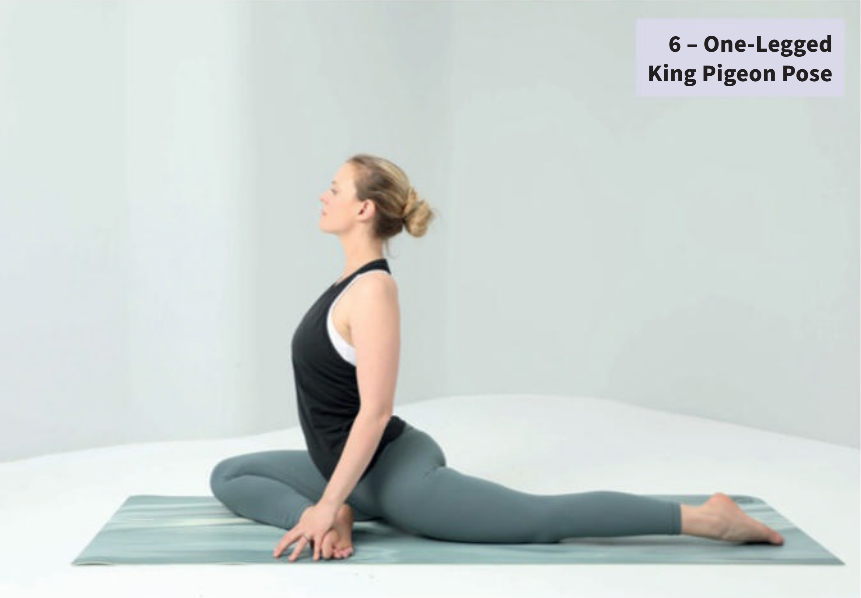
Notice your back switch on as you engage your front abdominals and lift up through the chest. See if you can close the front ribs in to prevent pinching into the lower spine. Maintain this pose for two to three breaths.



4 – Cobra Pose

4. Bhujangasana (Cobra Pose)

Now start to step back into plank, exhale lower the knees, chest and chin before rising up into a baby cobra (bhujangasana, image 4). Press into the front of your feet and lengthen into your crown, feel the shoulders and head press back and down. Exhale start to draw back into downward facing dog (adho mukha svanasana, image not shown) where you can walk out your legs by bending your knees. This will also drive awareness into the soles of the feet and stretch out your spine.



6 – One-Legged King Pigeon Pose

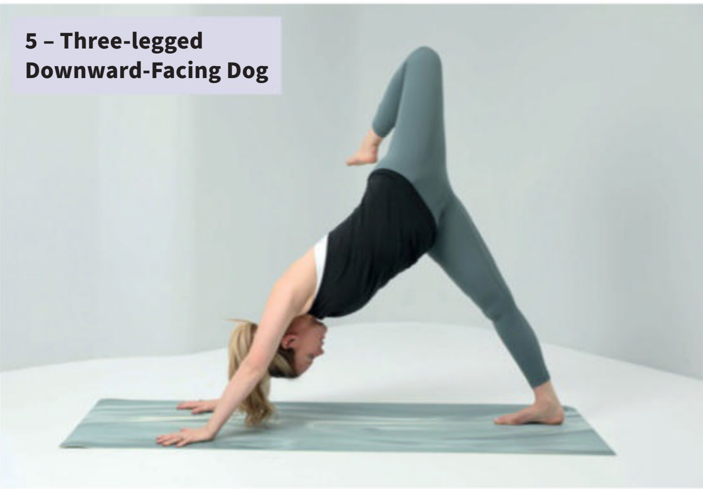
6. Eka Pada Rajakapotasana (One-Legged King Pigeon Pose)

Start to slide the right knee to the right wrist into pigeon pose from down dog (Eka Pada Rajakapotasana, image 6). Keep the chest lifted in this pose, breathing slowly into the back body. You can intensify the pose by lifting up onto your fingertips or placing your hands on blocks. Take a least five breaths here, drawing up into the crown of your head before lowering downwards towards the floor. You can hold onto your elbows or stretch the hands forwards to lay your chest onto your front leg. Allow the breath to soften here, study the back of your body as you release the arch of your lower back. After a few breaths repeat this pigeon pose on the left leg from down dog.

From down dog make your way to the top of your mat, remain in a forward fold, inhale to Ardha Uttanasana, a half way lift before releasing the spine completely in Uttanasana for a deep forward fold. Inhale, press into your feet and raise your arms overhead, looking towards your thumbs in Urdhva Hastasana (upwards salute, not shown). Exhale bring the hands back to your heart, begin to settle your breathing.

5. Tri Pada Adho Mukha Svanasana (Three-Legged Downward-Facing Dog)

When you're ready, find stillness in your down dog and lift your right leg up and back, bend the right knee and stack the hip, turn your gaze to look underneath your right arm (tri pada adho mukha svanasana, image 5). As you pause here, feel into the length of the spine from your right knee into your fingertips. In this variation, welcome a slight twist of the shoulders but try not to collapse into the left elbow. Release the leg into down dog and roll the spine forward to plank. Exhale lower the knees, chest and chin before rising up into a baby cobra again. Take a full inhale towards your lower back before rising again into your down dog. Repeat as you inhale lift your left leg up and back, stacking the hip and yawning open through the left hip joint. Release the leg into down dog and roll the spine forward to plank. Exhale lower the knees, chest and chin before rising up into a baby cobra. Take a full inhale towards your lower back before rising back up into your downward facing dog.

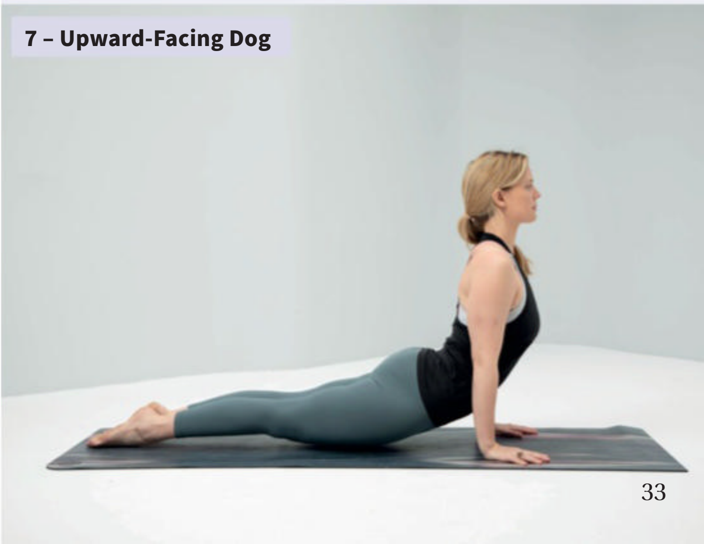


5 – Three-legged Downward-Facing Dog

7. Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (Upward-Facing Dog)

Inhale and reach your arms upwards to Urdhva Hastasana, exhale as you forward fold to Uttanasana. Start to inhale towards a half way lift of the spine (Ardha Uttanasana).

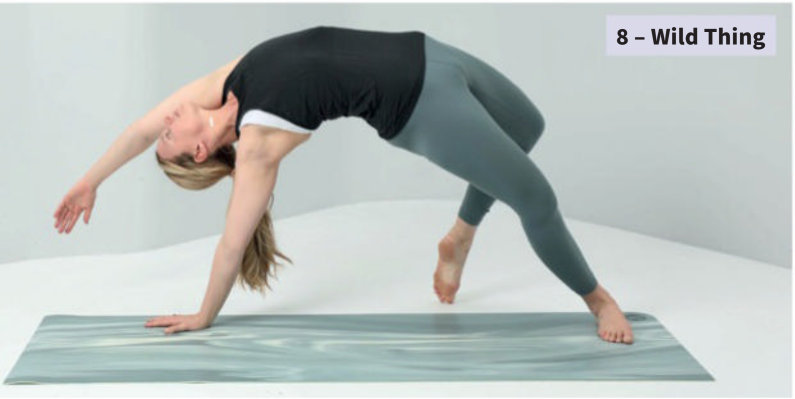
Feel your navel draw upwards towards the spine, exhale and step back to plank before lowering down the knees, chest and chin before rising up into a baby cobra, or upward-facing dog (Urdhva Mukha Svanasana, image 7). In upward-facing dog, draw your hips forward, pressing down through your hands and smiling through the collar bones to open your chest.



7 – Upward-Facing Dog

8. Camatkarasana (Wild Thing)

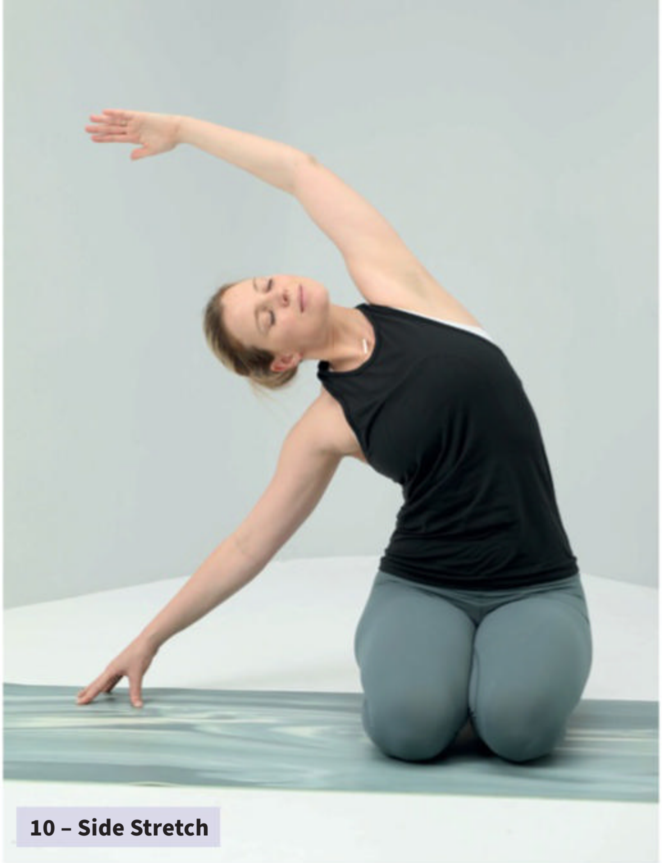
Exhale draw upwards to a downward-facing dog. Lift your right leg up and bend the right knee (tri pada adho mukha svanasana) — option to either stay here or begin to drop your right leg behind you into wild thing (Camatkarasana, image 8). Really extend through your right fingertips and imagine creating space between your right hand and right heel. Here we shall stretch the chest, heart, upper abdomen and neck in a single-handed heart opener to find the real peak of this flow!


8 – Wild Thing

9. Balasana (Child's Pose)

Hold a few breaths before returning to either down dog or rest for a moment in child's pose (Balasana, image 9). Both options are counter poses for wild thing. When your breath has returned back to a state of calm, repeat this pose on your left leg from your downward-facing dog.

9 – Child's Pose


10 – Side Stretch

10. Side Stretch

After repeating wild thing on the left side step into seated from your down dog. Come into kneeling, reach your right hand out to the side of your mat and lift your left arm up and across your head to lengthen out the side body (side stretch, image 10). Take a moment to feel into your waist and side of the neck before repeating on the left side. (If you find kneeling uncomfortable, option to sit in Sukhasana crossed-legged position (image not shown).

After lengthening out your side body, find your most comfortable seat. Close your eyes, allow your hands to rest by your body as you send your awareness into your spine. Notice what you have awakened in this flow, from the back of your body all the way round to the front. ॐ

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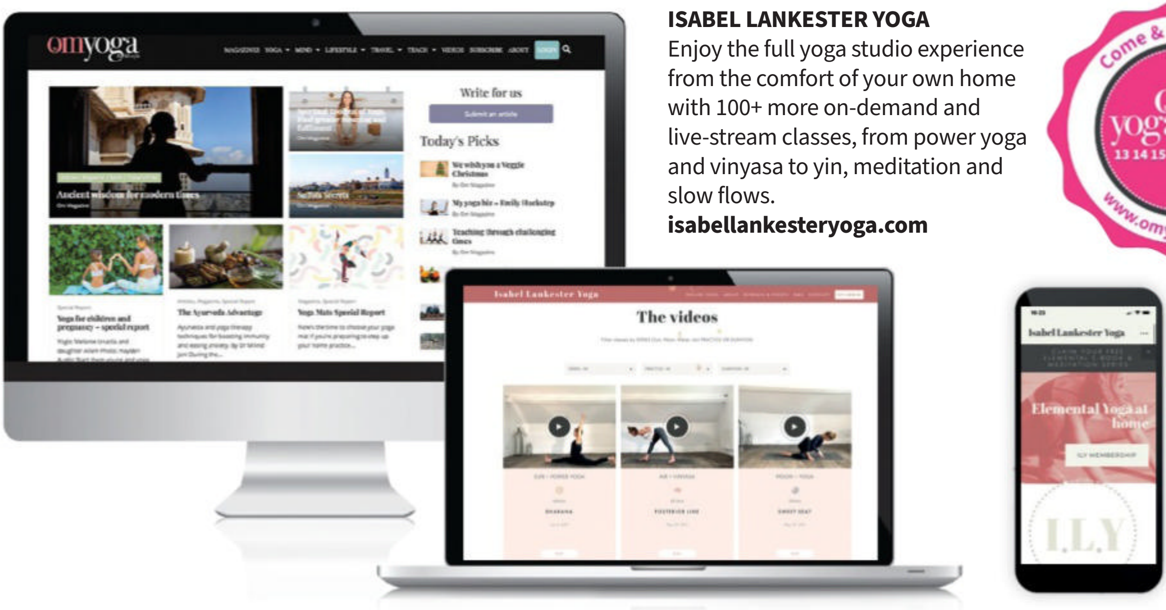

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om Competition

WIN

The necksaviour: an innovative and award-winning neck pain and headache relief product — 17 prizes to be won

This month we've teamed up with necksaviour, an award-winning neck pain and headache relief company that produces the innovative necksaviour — 17 prizes up for grabs in total

SAVE OUR NECKS!

We aren't very kind to our necks! We spend too long looking at phones and sitting poorly. Stress, work, dealing with kids, the gym etc, can take their toll. 50% of adults suffer with neck pain each year. Often muscle spasm and tension headaches are linked. So be kind to your neck with necksaviour!

necksaviours gently stretch your neck for neck pain and headache relief. Easy to use, incredibly portable, durable and comfortable, necksaviours were invented by a physio and there's a reason why they have won three design excellence awards!

Just bend necksaviour, relax on it and feel the stretch! Bending necksaviour creates a spring effect which comfortably stretches the neck, relieving pressure on joints and nerves, as well as helping improve posture, spinal alignment and blood flow to muscles.

So if you suffer with neck pain and headaches, know somebody who does or if you want to take your classes to another level necksaviour can help!

necksaviour
necksaviour
mini

WHAT'S UP FOR GRABS?

1st prize — necksaviour Mini 10 pack (one winner)— worth £237
2nd prize — necksaviour Mini 5 pack (one winner) — worth £130
3rd prize — necksaviour Mini — 15 runners-up prizes (15 winners)— worth £29 each

TERMS & CONDITIONS

Closing date for entries: 18th May 2023

To enter visit: ommagazine.com/necksaviour

A **360°** overview of...

Camel Pose (Ustrasana)

With Dr Kiki Morriss

Camel Pose (Ustrasana)

Camel Pose is a dynamic backbend that opens your chest and increases the mobility of your shoulders. It is an excellent pose to practice after long periods of sitting, and will improve your posture and your sense of wellbeing. Ustrasana opens your heart (anahata) chakra. When this chakra is open you are able to embrace life and love unconditionally, experiencing the power of compassion, forgiveness and gratitude.

CAMEL POSE (USTRASANA)

USTRA = CAMEL **ASANA = POSTURE**

MOVING INTO THE POSE

- Kneel with your feet and knees hip-width apart, and with your thighs perpendicular to the ground.
- Move your hips and thighs forwards.
- Lift and lengthen your torso.
- Gently arch back and reach back to hold your heels. As you do this avoid rotating your body.
- Place your palms on your soles, with your fingers pointing towards your toes.
- Breathe evenly and steadily in the pose.

FOCUS YOUR GAZE

- Your focal point (drishti) is at the tip of your nose or at a fixed point above or behind you (depending on where it's comfortable for you to hold your head).
- Alternatively try closing your eyes.

BACK

- Extend your back by engaging your erector spinae and quadratus lumborum.
- Tilt your pelvis forwards as your back extends.

HEAD AND NECK

- Keep your neck and jaw relaxed as you move your head back.
- Keep the back of your neck long.
- Don't allow your head to drop back.

SHOULDERS AND ARMS

- Extend your shoulders by using your posterior deltoids.
- Externally rotate your shoulders by engaging your teres minor and infraspinatus muscles.
- Extend your elbows by using your triceps.
- Use your rhomboids to bring your shoulder blades towards the midline, and to open your chest.

LEGS

- Extend your hips and femurs by engaging your gluteus maximus.
- If your pelvis moves backwards towards your lower legs, engage your quadriceps to shift your pelvis forwards.
- Maintain the angle between your thighs and lower legs.
- Press your shins, knees and feet firmly on the ground.

BENEFITS

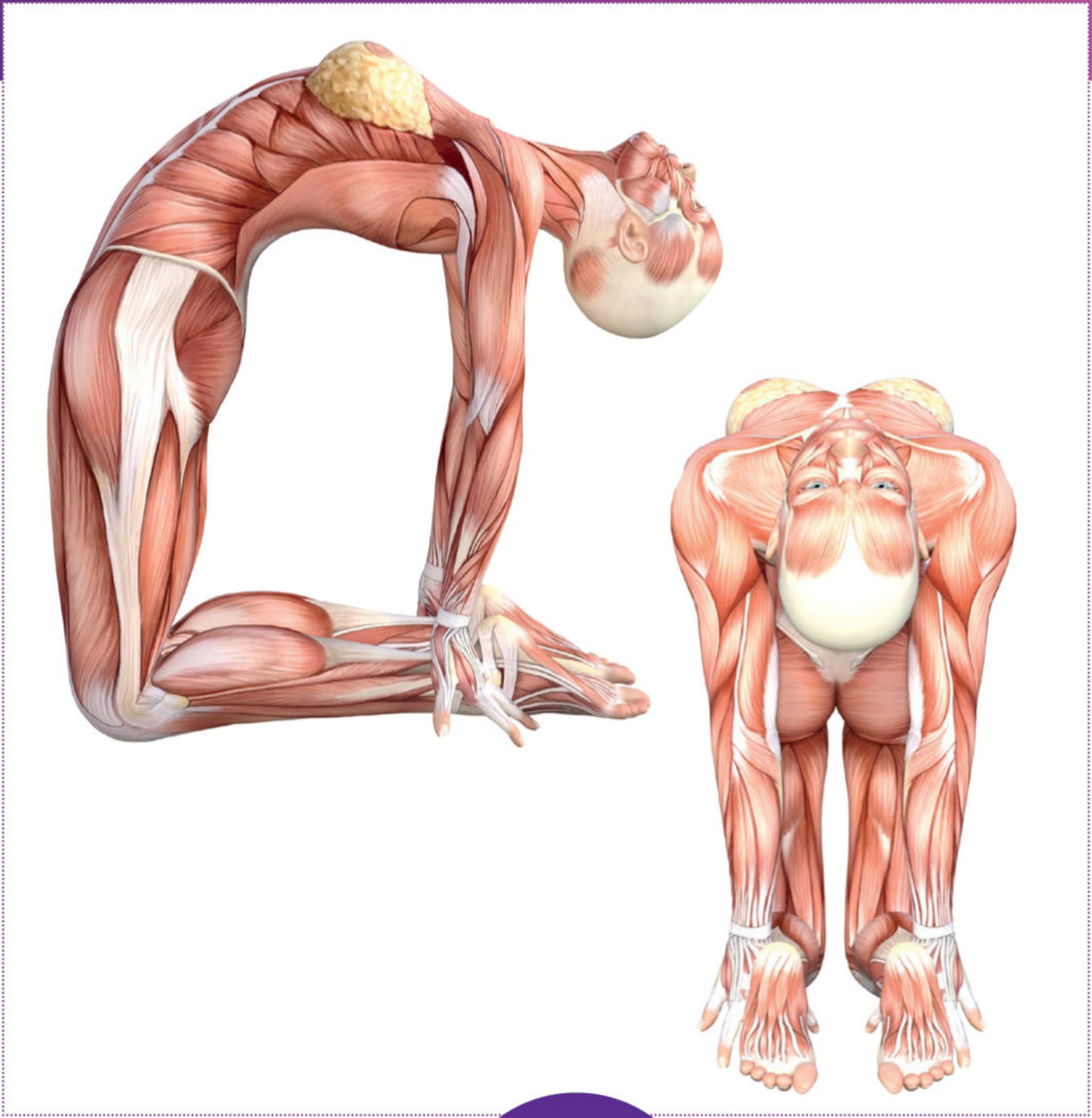
- Strengthens your back muscles, hamstrings and gluteal muscles.
- Stretches your chest, shoulders, abdomen, hip flexors and quadriceps.
- Improves your posture and opens your chest.
- Increases your confidence and sense of personal power.
- Opens your heart chakra.

VARIATIONS & MODIFICATIONS

- Tuck your toes under to make the pose slightly easier.
- Place a bolster or blankets on a chair. Arch back onto the chair, using the props to support your lumbar spine.
- If you are unable to arch back into the full pose, try keeping your hands on your hips and your thumbs on your sacrum.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Avoid the pose if you have a neck or back injury or issue.
- Practice with caution if you have a shoulder issue.



To see previous 360° poses, become a member of OM Magazine today. Visit ommagazine.com

ommagazine.com

Doctor Kiki Morriss is a medical doctor, yoga teacher and author of 'Nurturing Your Family With Yoga'. Visit: primrosehillyoga.com or Instagram @kiki.yoga

OM meets...

IVANA HORECNY

Meet this month's cover star, Ivana Horecny, originally from Slovakia and now living the dream in California. Here, she tells OM that despite a love of Scorpion pose and other advanced asana, the most important thing yoga has taught her is to simply be aware of the breath in order to find greater ease in stressful situations.

Words and photos by Wanda Bogacka-Plucinski

Ivana Horecny was born in Slovakia, but after traveling the world and living in multiple countries, from Sweden to Portugal, she now calls San Diego, California her home. She's a yoga teacher, a student of yoga herself, a full-time working woman, world traveler, adventure seeker and dog mum!

Although she can play hard like one of the guys, she's also very much a girly girl, who loves fashion and the softer things in life. What you might find refreshing about her is that she's unapologetically direct with a wicked sense of humour! She sat down with OM to talk all things about yoga and wellness.

How did you first get into yoga and why?

I returned to the US from living in Sweden while completing my masters for two years and had a difficult time adjusting to being back. I was labeled with 'adjustment disorder' aka 'reverse culture shock' (you know we have labels for everything nowadays). I was struggling with some depression and intermittent anxiety and one of my closest friends looked at me one day and said: "You need to do something for yourself. All you do is work or sit at home depressed. There's a yoga studio five minutes from your house, go try it out, I think you'll like it". And she was right! My whole life I've always been involved in sports or some form of physical art form, be it gymnastics or martial arts. Having not moved my body in two years had started to take a toll on me psychologically and I knew I had to get back into something that forced my body to move.

How has yoga changed your life?

It definitely helped to alleviate the depression and anxiety in the early days. As I progressed through my practice, I realised that it's constantly inspiring me and there's no end goal. It's an endless art/practice that always takes you to new places and presents new challenges. Most importantly, it has given me a sense of community. I have met some of my most favourite people in this world through this practice.

What made you decide to move from Slovakia to the US?

Simply put: Communism. I was born in Slovakia but have lived on the east coast of the US most of my life, since the age of five. In 2021, I moved to Portugal and today I call San Diego, California home. I felt and craved a drastic change, a change in location and scenery, career, a change in my overall environment. Portugal was a wonderful respite post-east coast departure, as I was constantly surrounded by stunning nature, the ocean and outdoor activities… so when I contemplated a move back to the US, I needed to move to a location where I would have a similar year-round, outdoor lifestyle. Hence, San Diego was a great choice!

How does the East Coast vs West Coast yoga community differ in the US?

I have been exploring the yoga scene in southern California over the last few months and have found a pretty significant difference between yoga on the East coast vs West coast. East coast focuses more on the studio aesthetic, providing a welcome experience to practitioners, and the teachers focus on proper alignment, detailed cues and warm-up as well as progressive sequencing to prepare the body for a 'peak pose'. West coast yoga provides more outdoor community classes

Photos and interview by Wanda Bogacka-Plucinski

overlooking the ocean, which are great, and which I personally enjoy. The studio classes here are predominantly heated yoga or 'hot yoga', often a bit overkill in terms of the heat. Most of the classes are taught as a set sequence repeated throughout the class with minimal creativity, or progression to more complex poses, and complex poses are rarely, if ever, properly cued or taught; I'm struggling to feel challenged in most classes here. I have found one or two teachers in the San Diego area that are really great, but overall I miss and appreciate my teachers on the East coast.

What is your favourite wellness destination for a vacation, a yoga retreat or just fun?

Bali, for sure, although that is a bit of a cliche as everyone and their mother goes to Bali for yoga retreats. It is truly a magical place and I hope it remains that way and doesn't suffer the same fate as Tulum did (overrun by tourists). A close second, the Guanacaste Province in Costa Rica with its 'no name' dirt roads, endless stretches of ocean, and the most amazing sunsets I've ever seen in my life.

What style of yoga do you practice and teach?

Vinyasa, Power and Yin Yoga.

How often do you get on your mat to practice?

Ideally three or four times a week. As I'm still in the process of trying out studios here in San Diego, I've been practicing at a few different places and taking class with different teachers but I haven't been consistent on getting on the mat — some weeks it's four times and some weeks it's only two times. However, even on my busiest weeks I try to push myself to go to class at least twice a week.

How would you describe your own teaching style?

A high intensity power flow with creative sequencing and alignment cues. I really love to teach people how to get into difficult poses, challenge my students to help them see that they are capable of more than they even thought possible. Sometimes pushing yourself to that edge gives you greater confidence, not just on your mat, but in life.

Who inspired you during your early yoga days?

My first instructor, Cindy Herr. Her classes were so much fun and she loved to challenge us. I still look up to her so much and my arm balance and forearm stand practice is very much thanks to her. Also, Cathy Madeo, who I had taken my very comprehensive 200-hour yoga teacher training with. She really taught me the importance of cueing, sequencing, and allowing your personality to come through in your teaching style — mastering those three factors can make or break your class.

> "Don't forget to breathe. The single most important thing that yoga has taught me is to become aware of my breath."

What's the most important thing yoga has taught you?

Don't forget to breathe. The single most important thing that yoga has taught me is to become aware of my breath. I tend to hold my breath in stressful situations, even during strenuous workouts, which in turn only perpetuates the stress instead of mitigating it.

What does wellness mean to you?

Wellness to me doesn't mean the fancy yoga retreats and spa days (although I love those!). True wellness means that you are living your life in the most holistic way possible: eating foods that are in their purest form (not genetically modified), getting plenty of sunshine, being out in nature, laughing with your loved ones, moving your body, and looking after your mental health — which often times means saying no even when you have FOMO (fear of missing out) because your body is telling you that you need to rest. Missing out on temporary fun to build permanent stability is not a loss.

How has yoga helped you see yourself, your body and mind, on and off the mat?

It has created a deeper appreciation for my body and what it is capable of doing. It has kept my mind and body sharp and ageless.

How do you stay motivated?

Practicing yoga truly gives me personal satisfaction. Yoga is ‘doing something for myself’, a time just for me, it makes me feel good inside and out. It’s the truth! After a class, I feel happier, my skin glows, I feel more hopeful, centred, fluid in my body and have a more positive outlook on my life and the world. My students, my mentors, and people who have the guts to go for what they truly want in life are also my motivating factors

What are you most grateful for?

Being alive! And handstands!

What feeds your soul?

So many things. But here are some that instantly come to mind: Good food, fresh air, the smell of the ocean, views from mountain tops, loving friends and family, laughter, croissants, and my dogs.

What do you believe is your true calling in life?

To truly live life and experience it in all its glory. To be uniquely me. To be my own person no matter what the crowd is saying or doing. Having the courage to stand alone from the crowd and be okay with that. It’s never easy to be different, but for me, I’d rather stand in my own truth, listen to my own intuitive voice than be a follower and sell out for the sake of fitting in. I’ve also been told my calling is to be a guide and I feel that…to guide others through difficult and challenging times in their lives.

Is there a person in your life that truly sees you for who you are?

My mother, of course! She gave birth to me, after all, and we have an incredible closeness and bond. Also my close-knit circle of girlfriends and of course my dogs.

What do you do when you are not practicing or teaching yoga?

I have an innate love for hiking, scuba diving and surfing. I got into hiking as a child, hiking with my parents in the Carpathian Mountains of Slovakia. It was such a great family bonding experience, moments I will never forget — plus, there’s nothing like seeing the world from the top of a mountain. Also, I started surfing while living in Portugal in 2021. Surfing is the closest I’ve come to feeling like I’m flying… other than the time I base jumped off a cliff in Moab, Utah.

What about self-care? How do you fill up your own cup?

The greatest form of self-care is self-love. Learning how to not betray yourself and cultivating a strong intuition. On a lighter note: travel. I love going back home to Europe and exploring corners of the world I’ve never seen. Connecting with locals, eating their food, hearing their stories is such a gift. I also love getting facials and massages to help release stored stress in my body. And beach walks with my dogs.

What are your plans going forward?

At the moment, I’m taking a short break from teaching to reconnect to my own practice and become a student again. I’ve taught over 300 hours in the last three years, in addition to my full-time job, and somewhere along the way I forgot what it was like to just be a student…which is the reason I fell in love with this practice to begin with!

Connect with Ivana Horecny on Instagram @yoga_with_ivana

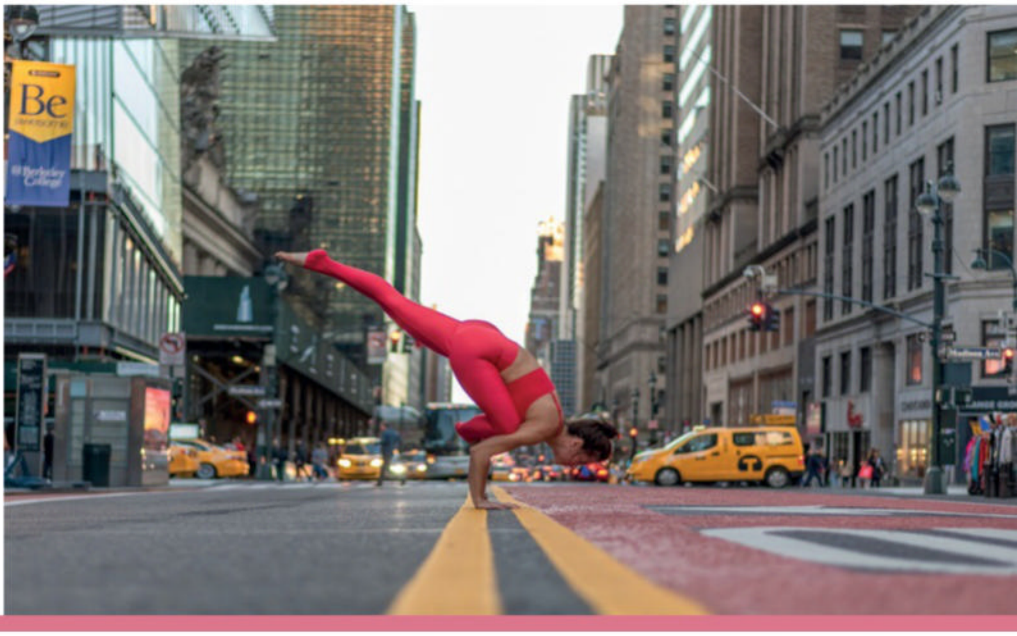
Photos and interview by: Wanda Bogacka-Plucinski
IG: @wanda.photography

QUICK Q&A

Favourite yoga pose and why?
Forearm scorpion pose. I’ve been in love with it from the moment I started my yoga practice. Can’t explain it. I just fell in love. It’s the feeling I get when I’m in it that keeps me coming back for more.

If you could take a class as a student with any teacher from anywhere and from any period of time (now or in the distant past) who would it be with and why?
A back-bending workshop with Janice Liou. Her classes changed my practice and opened doors that I didn’t realise existed. I miss her classes.

Favourite quote:
“Changing your external factors won’t change your internal struggles. The work must come from within.”



Yoga YOUR way

A three-part series on expanding your practice to make it support your body, your life, your needs.

By Esther Marie

PART TWO - MIND

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Yoga can support our mind through two different approaches: on the mat and off the mat. Through our on the mat asana practice, we are able to steady the wandering mind and draw focus back to the present through movement that is mindful and united with our breath. This is often said to be experienced as the post-yoga 'high' — a sense of mental peace and clarity, even euphoria.

Off the mat, we can use the teachings of yoga philosophy to not only practice yoga without physically moving on our mats, but also embody the practice.

There are eight so-called 'limbs' of yoga, only one of which relates to the physical — the other seven paths to practice yoga do not involve actual, physical movement. Within this eight-fold path, there are guidelines, principles, and concepts, all written to help us understand ourselves, connect to ourselves and create inner harmony. All of which I think we need in today's frantic, modern world more than ever.

I found yoga philosophy before I found yoga asana, which is the usual way these philosophical concepts are discovered. I started practicing mindfulness and meditation which led me to find the eight limbs of yoga when I was battling severe anxiety and depression over 10 years ago. To say I have a deep love and passion for yoga philosophy is a big understatement! The teachings of yoga philosophy have been able to heal the wounds of my past that years of psychotherapy alone could not. Despite the teachings of this philosophy being written sometime between the second and fourth century BC, they are able to be adapted and made relatable to life in 2023. They are as relevant today as they were back then.

Here are my three favourite yoga philosophy concepts and a few tips on how you can bring them into your everyday life to find inner peace, strength, and balance without even stepping on your mat:

1. Ahimsa

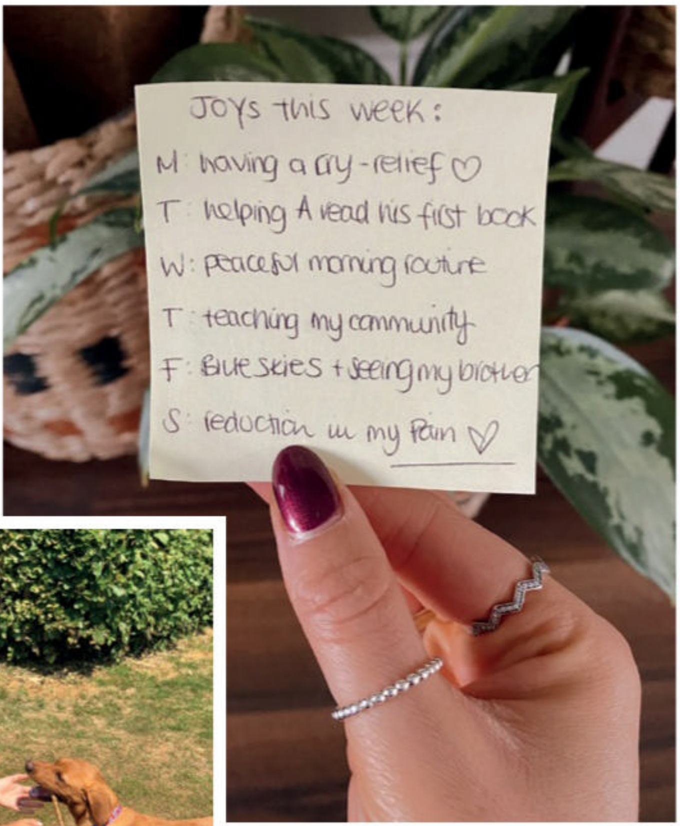
Ahimsa, meaning non-violence or non-harm. Traditionally in yoga philosophy it is written that ahimsa is to mean non-violence towards all living creatures, oneself and an attitude of universal benevolence. To truly extend this attitude to others we must first cultivate acceptance, tolerance, and compassion for ourselves. Think about how you talk to yourself silently: is it kind or sometimes cruel? Have you ever judged yourself? Been hard and critical on yourself? By being more aware of your automatic thoughts — and taking a mindful pause to reframe any unkind ones — you are embodying ahimsa and practicing yoga. It is only after we are able to truly treat ourselves with compassion and loving kindness that we can then extend this to others, and the world. This teaching has created the most dramatic change in my life. From living a life of self-sabotage, crippling anxiety and total disconnection from myself, it was ahimsa that showed me another way to think and to live.

2. Santosha

Santosha means complete contentment and satisfaction. This is generally considered to be both an attitude of the mind and a state of deep inner peace. How we can integrate this into our lives today is by expressing gratitude. By becoming aware of all the good in our lives, noticing and appreciating it all, rather than only wanting more and more — in this way, we are embodying Santosha. Another way of practicing this is through slowing down and savouring the moment and simple pleasures around us. For example, savouring and sipping your cup of tea in the morning instead of gulping it down whilst watching the news. Gratitude and Santosha both teach us that paying attention to what's going on outside of our head, rather than in it, allows us to experience new and deeper levels of appreciation for everyday life.

3. Aparigraha

Aparigraha is often translated as non-attachment. This has been one of the most eye opening and ongoing lessons for me in my yogic journey, both on and off the mat. We can experience Aparigraha by making sure we are not cluttering our homes with excessive things, that we are not hoarding, not wasting food, or even holding onto things from our past that no longer serve us. Another way we can use this philosophy is to let go of the belief that we 'should' or 'ought' to be doing or living in a certain way. This mentality is one of resistance and often makes us feel worse. By adopting a non-attachment mentality, we focus on the moment rather than the result, rely less on external and material possessions and we discover the freedom of doing things for the joy they bring us in the moment, rather than worrying about the outcome.



Joys this week:
M: having a cry-relief ♡
T: helping A read his first book
W: peaceful morning routine
T: teaching my community
F: Blue skies + seeing my brother
S: reduction in my Pain ♡

I hope this has provided a little insight into how yoga philosophy doesn't have to be overly complicated and is still very much valid, needed and relevant for modern life. Personally, I believe the basic principles of yoga philosophy are beautifully simple in essence. They teach us how to nourish and care for our body and mind and connect to our higher soul self. They encourage us to explore our inner world and adopt healthy habits in our external world. You could even say that yoga philosophy is actually the oldest and wisest written teaching on what self-care truly is and how to practice it, on and off the mat! ॐ

Esther Marie is a yoga teacher trained in meditation, mindfulness and stress reduction. Her classes merge her love for functional strength and movement as medicine. Find her on Instagram @esthermarieyoga and practice with her online via her yoga and mindfulness app EMY: Wellness & Yoga

**** Read Part 3 of Esther Marie's 'Yoga Your Way' trilogy coming in the June issue of OM — on sale 18 May, 2023***

18+

WHAT IS
AVAXHOME?

Yoga at the dentist

Soothing yoga and meditation techniques when you're sitting in the dentist's chair. **By Maria Oliver**

When we talk about 'yoga off the mat', it normally refers to Karma Yoga or doing good deeds out in the world. But is it possible, and actually helpful, to practice yoga at the dentist?

Let me be clear about my expertise here. I'm not a qualified therapist or counsellor, I'm a yoga teacher. I don't have experience of having a phobia or anxiety about going to the dentist. Neither do I have any knowledge of dentistry – hence my blissful ignorance about dentists' tools, as you will see.

I'm suggesting how some of the practices you learn in a yoga class might help you to manage an everyday level of worry and/or discomfort when visiting the dentist (which can, of course, equally be applied to any other seemingly stressful or uncomfortable situation).

Visiting the dentist is not always an enjoyable experience as an adult. The inspiration for this article came following a 30-minute session with a hygienist prodding my tender gums with a metal, electrical implement and hoovering/spraying my mouth while I lay horizontally and tried not to choke or dribble.

> "Keeping a calm, steady breath and breathing into your belly helps to activate your parasympathetic nervous system. It persuades your brain that you are in a safe place and everything is fine."

Not only can yoga help you to feel better during your dental appointment, but if you stay calm and relaxed then it makes it easier for your dentist to get on with their job. Your appointment is over sooner and everyone is happy!

So here's how I got through my recent appointment.

First, by using a Drishti point. This is an external point of focus, so that your mind concentrates on one thing, rather than jumping around from thought to thought or from one worry to another. In a dentist's chair, the lamp is shining straight down at you and is an excellent Drishti point. Obviously it shouldn't be used if the light is painful to your eyes, but dentists often give you protective eyewear – if it's tinted then you can safely gaze at the lamp. If not the lamp, maybe there's something else – one of my dentists had a children's poster on the ceiling.

Secondly, by carrying out a body scan. Where are you feeling tension? The most common areas are your jaw (no surprise if you're having to lie back with your mouth unnaturally open), your forehead, your shoulders, and your belly. Can you allow yourself to feel soft and heavy, and let yourself give in to the support of the dentist's chair?

Thirdly, by focusing on your breath. It isn't easy to breathe with someone poking around in your mouth, including a thing that sucks out or blows water or whatever it does (I could research the purpose of this tool, but I don't think

I want to know). If your nose is clear, then it's obviously better to breathe through it so that you can maintain a slow, steady, effortless breath. Breathing through your mouth will huff up the dentist's mirror so they can't get on with their job, and trying to hold your breath and breathe through your mouth when you get the opportunity is not at all relaxing! Keeping a calm, steady breath and breathing into your belly helps to activate your parasympathetic nervous system. It persuades your brain that you are in a safe place and everything is fine. With every out-breath, allow yourself to feel heavier. If possible, allow your out-breath to lengthen so that it's longer than your in-breath. If your breathing is slow and relaxed, then your body and mind will relax, too.

Finally, practice being non-grasping: the Yama of Aparigraha. You can let go of the idea of having to be in control. Your dentist is a skilled, qualified practitioner who knows what they're doing. Years ago, I undertook a management qualification and one of the lessons has always remained with me: a definition of trust. You can only trust someone if you believe two things about them: that they have expertise, and that they care about you. An expert who doesn't care is not trustworthy, and a caring person with no expertise isn't either. If you feel as if you can trust your dentist, you can tell yourself that they know what they're doing and want to help you. Let go of the need for self-preservation. If you don't feel like you need to protect yourself, you'll feel more relaxed.

So, next time you visit the dentist for a routine procedure, maybe you can turn your appointment into a meditation, and come out feeling refreshed mentally…. and dentally!

Maria Oliver teaches yoga in Hertfordshire for children, adults, pregnant women and new mums and is the author of several yoga books for children. Visit: boxmooryoga.co.uk

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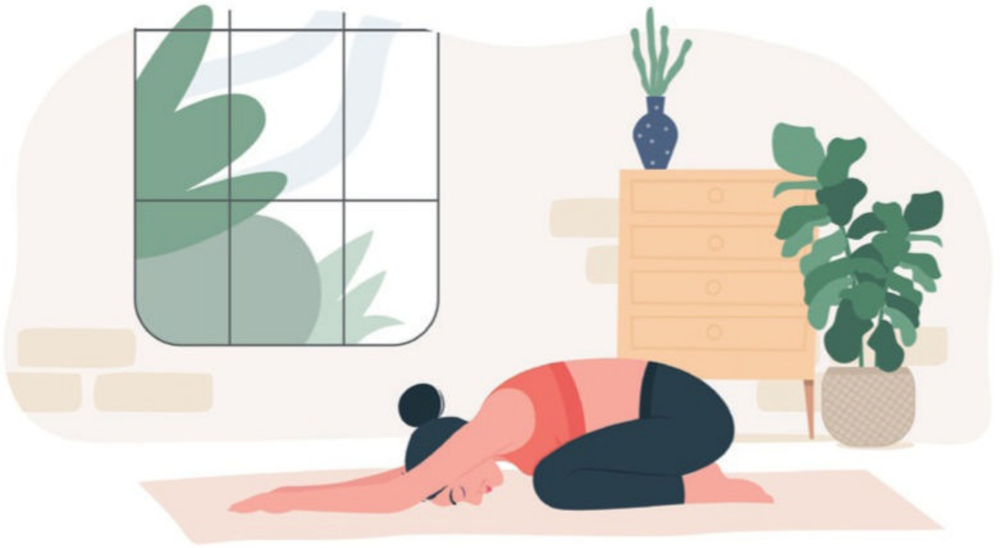

Child's play

Why does child's pose feel so good? By **Diane Ashfield**

Balasana, or child's pose, is a posture we often come into after working on a challenging asana in order to relax and reset the muscles. It's classified as a restorative pose, gently draping the body over the bent legs, resting the arms by our sides, palms facing upwards and our head gravitating towards the floor or wherever feels comfortable.

Child's pose is a gentle stretch for the back, hips, thighs, and ankles. It can help relieve back pain and is often used after back-bending asana to reset and release the spine. In Balasana our bodies resemble a child in the womb and we are encouraged to be in the same state of mind as a foetus – not thinking or feeling, but being nurtured by an unseen entity.

> Balasana, or child's pose, is a posture we often come into after working on a challenging asana in order to relax and reset the muscles.

Even though this is an extremely relaxing and resting pose, it's not suitable – nor comfortable – for everybody. Those with ankle, knee or abdominal issues, or those in later stages of pregnancy, should not practice child's pose. Though they may find practicing Balasana sitting on a chair with a pillow or cushion on the knees, or with legs wide and resting the arms on another chair or table positioned in front more beneficial.

For those of us on the floor, we can alter or modify our child's pose in lots of ways. Here are a few ideas:

- If the forehead doesn't reach the floor, we can place a block, cushion or make fists stacked on top of each other to rest the head.
- If our bottom doesn't quite reach our heels, we can place a cushion or blanket underneath our seat – this feels amazing even if we are able to sit back on our heels! Gently push the bottom back into the cushion and relax.
- Stretching the arms out ahead elongates the torso and lengthens the spine. Push your fingers into the floor while pushing the bottom back and down.
- Bend the elbows, bring the palms together and rest the thumbs on the back of the neck – this is particularly great for releasing tight shoulders and upper arms.
- Take the knees a little wider. This encourages the chest to come closer to the floor, promoting a sense of grounding.
- For a deeper and more restorative version of Balasana, place a bolster or pillow under your chest or belly and release yourself into the pose for a few minutes or for as long as feels comfortable.

Wherever you are in your child's pose, close your eyes, take long, deep breaths and surrender yourself to each exhalation. With your neck in a neutral position, feel your shoulders relaxing, your muscles releasing and easing with every out breath, and notice the total innocence of this pose.

Little wonder that once we get into this position we don't want to come out, so if you want to stay a little longer, then do!

BALASANA BENEFITS

Benefits of Balasana when practiced regularly:

- ♦ **Increases blood circulation**
- ♦ **Aids digestion**
- ♦ **Strengthens knee ligaments**
- ♦ **Lengthens and stretches the lower back muscles**
- ♦ **Stretches the shoulders and ankles**
- ♦ **Energises the whole body**
- ♦ **Releases fatigue**
- ♦ **Calms the mind**
- ♦ **Helps reduce stress and anxiety**
- ♦ **Connects you to your breath**

Diane Ashfield (aka Yoga With Dash) is a British Wheel of Yoga teacher with classes online and in-person in Bromley, Kent. Connect with her on Instagram @yogawithdashuk

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Head to ommagazine.com/om-yoga-awards to complete the nomination form.

8 Trending Yoga Styles:
Special Report

And now for something completely different! One of the best things about yoga is the sheer diversity of classes, teachers and styles available — there literally is something for everyone. If you're stuck in a rut in your practice, or just want to have a bit of fun, or explore new things then take a look at some of the options presented within this report.

For peace vibes for busy parents there's Mindful Yoga For Mums or even Yoga in PJ's — who needs to get dressed for a yoga class these days! If it's more therapeutic styles you're interested in, then explore the world of Yoga For Trauma, or even Menopause Yoga. And it's summertime so splashing about on the water with SUP Yoga is always a great idea! Keep your practice fresh and try something new this month. A whole world of yoga awaits.

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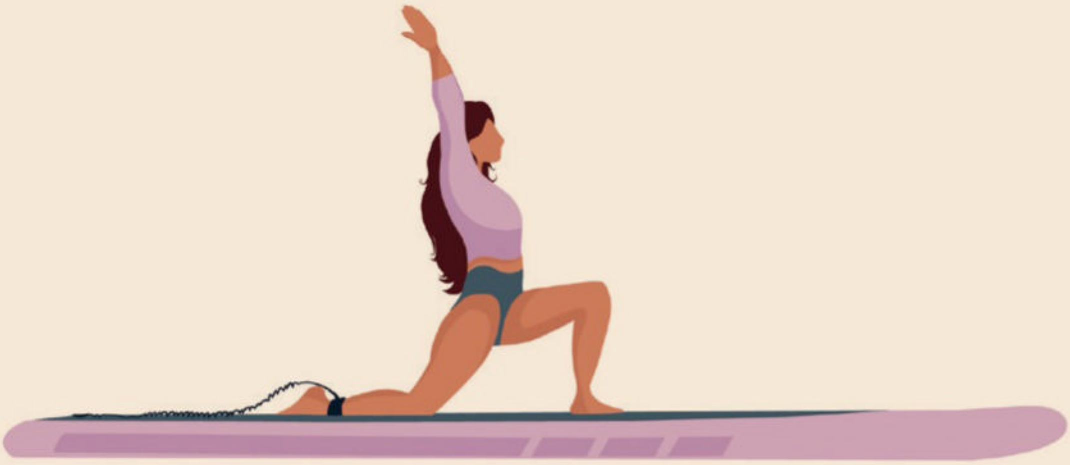


SUP Yoga

Doing yoga on a stand-up paddle board is not as simple as it sounds, but the rewards are definitely worth it.

By Lorna Chapman

Picture yourself sitting or lying in the sunshine on a board floating on a river or a lake. You're relaxing into its gentle rocking, listening to the water lapping, feeling the breeze on your skin and breathing in the fresh air. Maybe there are wild geese, swans, ducks, or even seals around you. What could be a more blissful start to a yoga practice than connecting with nature in this way?

SUP Yoga is yoga on a stand-up paddle board, ideally tethered on a calm, natural body of water. Moving into asana, practicing on the relative instability of the board, strengthens you, improves your balance and brings you a fresh perspective to familiar poses and enhances your proprioception. Maintaining postures like Warrior I and II may not be as easy as on your land mat; put a foot wrong, and you risk getting wet! You may feel more confident holding a downward dog, with its four 'paws' of contact.

Yoga on the water requires extra concentration as the board is constantly moving. As you focus on your asana and breathing, your balance may be challenged by a gust of wind, or the wake of a passing vessel.

At the end, as you bathe in a tranquil savasana — lying on your board — you may choose to dangle your hands and feet in the water, feeling any tensions seeping away into the river or lake.

Safety first: Water confidence and the ability to swim at least 50m in light clothing is a pre-requisite for SUP yoga. If you are to paddle to your yoga spot, you will need to wear a buoyancy aid. Also, find a teacher qualified in yoga, SUP Yoga, SUP Safety, SUP Basics and First Aid, who will have knowledge about weather and tides.

The board: You can rent boards, but if you're keen to buy, choose a good-quality inflatable one, 10-12ft long, 32" or so wide and at least 5" thick to maximise stability. Yoga-specific boards are available, but if you want to paddle too, an 'all-rounder' is best. Steer clear of longer, slimline racing boards for yoga, as these are less stable.

Lorna Chapman lives in Winchester and has been teaching yoga in Hampshire since 2003 and SUP Yoga since 2016. She also loves to sail and swims in the sea all year round. Find out more: lunayogawinchester.co.uk

Yoga in PJ's

Forget the fancy leggings, your pyjamas will do just fine when you've got a self-nurturing practice at home.

By Kat Farrants

When folks think of yoga they'll often think of a skinny, impossibly bendy woman in some jazzy leggings doing a fancy pose. That's a very impressive, and often beautiful image. Perhaps it is a great image to encourage people to try to do yoga, as an aspirational image, to try to make ever-more-complex shapes.

In my 20s and early 30s, I was exploring more complex poses, becoming more bendy, practicing faster vinyasa, more complicated transitions between poses. It was exhilarating, fun, an adventure into the limits of flexibility and strength.

But I was lucky enough to experience an immobilising car-crash in my 30s — this stopped my search for increasing complexity and flexibility in its tracks. Instead, I was forced to learn how to move again, slowly and gently, through therapeutic yoga. And when my heart was broken into pieces after my husband left me shortly afterwards, I learned the healing power of breath.

Now, in my late 40s, I'm happy to say my practice is slowing down, in a world which demands ever increasing speed. My practice is a practice of caring and attending to my inner world, so that I can make better decisions and respond with wisdom to life's challenges.

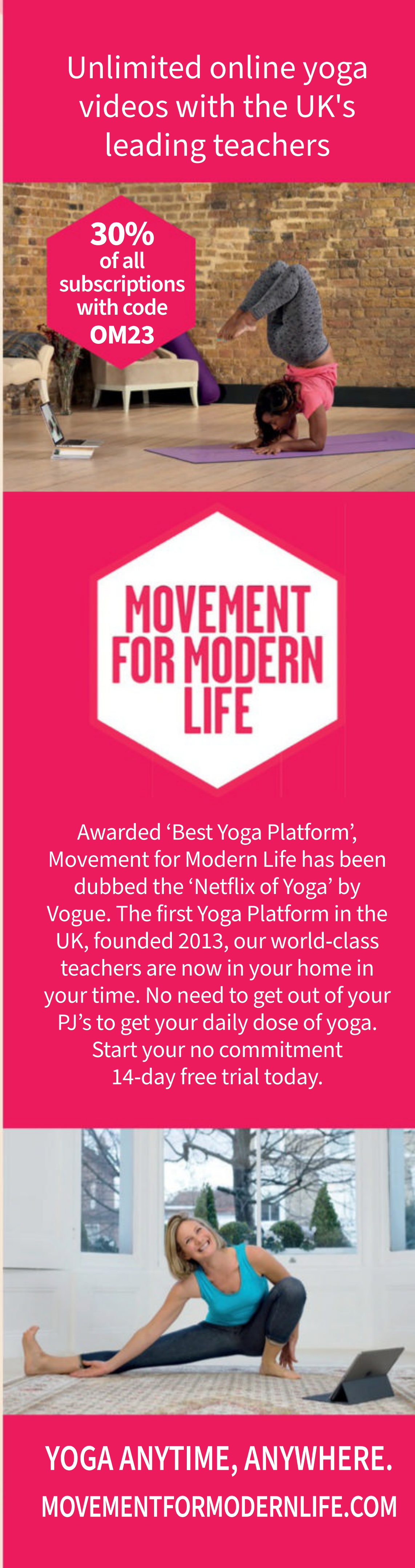
My physical practice is calming and regulating my nervous system through movement, meditation and breathwork. A refinement of the art of knowing myself, becoming more sensitive to my own body, and keeping my nervous system less jangled and stress-levels controlled. It's getting to know my body better, feeling it from the inside out. It's a coming home practice, coming home to my true self.

That sense of home-coming is done in the comfort of my own home. In a cosy nook in my front room, in front of the fireside on chilly winter nights, and in front of the view of trees, to remind me of the expansiveness and beauty of nature and consciousness.

I mostly practice either first thing in the morning, to gently yawn my body awake. Or in the evening before bedtime to release and calm the day. I wear my PJ's. Because they are comfortable, because I feel cosy, supported and nurtured and it's just what I'm wearing in the morning and evening.

So my daily practice is easy, simple and straightforward, and just do-able, even if just for 10 minutes a day. Yoga in PJ's is a commitment to my inner world, my wellbeing, a home-coming, a place where yoga can be a practice of nurture, comfort and support.

Kat Farrants is the founder of Movement for Modern Life (movementformodernlife.com)



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Salty Yoga

Breathe better with the healing combination of salt and yoga

No, this is not a yoga style where you immerse yourself in the sea, but it does involve a lot of salt, a natural form of healing that dates back many centuries. You'll find this rather unique yoga offering at Salt Revive (*saltrevive.com*), which provides various salt therapy treatments and techniques to clients at its base in Beverley, East Yorkshire.

And it's introduced Salty Yoga, a gentle practice that will leave you blissed out as well as breathing well thanks to the salt in the purpose-built salt rooms. A specialist machine grinds down 100% natural rock salt and disperses this into the room.

The 90-minute candlelit workshop includes breath work and a wonderful long Yoga Nidra (deep relaxation) to finish with, all whilst enjoying the many healing benefits of the salt therapy. The class is suitable for all levels of practitioners, from beginners to the more experienced.

> "The 90-minute candlelit workshop includes breath work and a wonderful long yoga nidra to finish with, all whilst enjoying the many healing benefits of the salt therapy."

There's more: as well as Salty Yoga, you can also experience Salty Gong Baths, Salty Meditation and Salty Tai Chi. There are other special events where you can even make your own aromatherapy blend or crochet basket during a salt workshop. Let's not forget the kids either — bring them along too for the Salty Kids Club!

You can even enjoy salt therapy in the comfort of your own home, with the Salt Revive shop selling various bundles to help you feel revived and breathing and sleeping better. We love the gorgeous Sleep Well Box (£35) which contains, among lots of other things, a big bag of Himalayan bath salts and inspiring affirmation cards. Life is too short not to breathe easy!

Find out more about Salt Revive and Salty Yoga online at: saltrevive.com

Mindful yoga for mums

Cecilia Cristolovean www.yogaandphoto.com

3 reasons to love the versatility of an at-home practice for busy mums. **By Rima Patel**

Whilst the allure of escaping life for an hour or more is feasible for some, the reality of finding childcare and carving out that much time is simply impossible for most mothers.

Juggling work, kids, and life in general means most women with children struggle to make it to their mat for traditional yoga classes running from 45 to 90 minutes.

This is where mindful yoga platforms, built specifically for busy mums, come in to save the day. The need for calming yoga methods and resilience-building practices is even greater when you are responsible for children. Here are three ways these platforms are providing women with tools to build the mental and physical strength that life demands from them.

1. Adaptability

Mum life demands something different each day, so a mindful yoga practice needs to be adaptable. On some days, a calming meditation is required to deal with toddler tantrums; on others, an unwinding, stretching flow to release from a busy workday. An online library of yoga classes provides mums with the ability to tailor their practice according to their ever-changing needs.

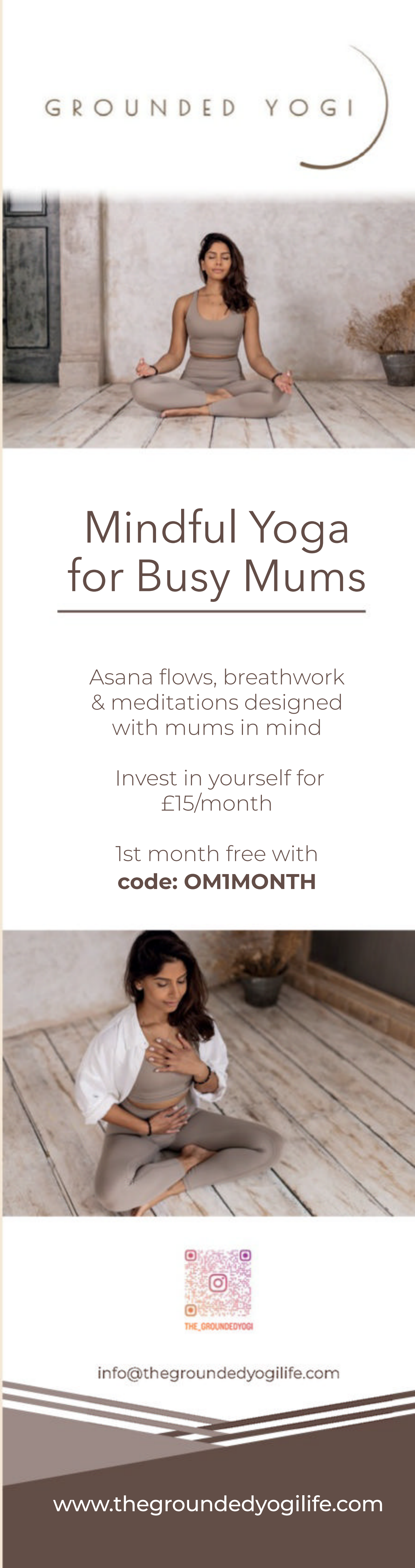
2. Accessible

When the yoga practice is accessible online through a library of videos there is no need for childcare. Mums can practice where they want and when they want. Some mums wake up at the crack of dawn to get on their mat while others simply pop on some headphones and practice while their kids are busy watching tv. This ability to fit in their own self-care amongst their parenting duties allows mums to prioritise their own wellbeing without feeling like it comes at a price.

3. Flexibility

It's no secret that time is the biggest obstacle in prioritising self-care when you're a mother. There are never enough hours in the day, and even harder is the ability to commit to a set duration each week. This is why the ability to choose how long you can practice for each time is perfect for mothers. Quick meditations can be squeezed into a busy morning while asana flows can be organised by duration to give mums exactly what they need in the time they have available.

Whatever the reason, there is no doubt that this new style of mindful yoga for mums is giving a hugely important part of our society the ability to ground and centre themselves. The fact that all they need is a mat and a small space anywhere in the comfort of their own home is a bonus!



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Anusara Yoga

Awakening hearts. Illuminating minds. Strengthening bodies.

By Sarah Powell

As a yoga teacher trainer I often get asked why Anusara Yoga has captured my heart? What makes it different? Isn't all yoga just yoga? Why am I devoted to teaching only this style?

Whilst I acknowledge the value in all styles of yoga, Anusara is my true love. Here's why:

Anusara Yoga is a modern methodology to teach yoga that is so much more than an asana-based practice. Anusara yoga teachers are expertly trained to bring spirit and grace to each and every class — celebrating life's diversity, the inspiring qualities of our heart, and encouraging all yogis to seek a connection to something greater than themselves.

Anusara blends safe, well-aligned yoga poses with a positive, life-affirming philosophy that will stimulate and motivate you physically, mentally and spiritually. A regular yoga practice can make you feel physically vibrant, and emotionally open to embrace this beautiful, crazy life of ours!

How Anusara yoga differs from other styles can be summarised with the '3 A's' — attitude, alignment and action.

Attitude: A life-affirming philosophy of saying 'Yes' to this life; the beauty of it all, and even the gritty, darker moments too. It is all a part of being human and expanding more into our miraculous embodiment — not pulling away or retreating from it — but to dive in more and to celebrate this life.

Alignment: The use of the clear and precise five UPAs (Universal Principles of Alignment) allows students to safely explore poses that challenge and transform them. These five steps are applied uniquely to each body, meaning students also get to celebrate their individuality. A way to really take an asana practice to the next level.

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Action: Anusara students learn to tune in to their natural energy and develop a beautiful balance between stability and freedom. Teachers then actively encourage everyone to take this off the mat and share the yogic action out in the world within families, communities and beyond. Community (Kula) is a key pillar of the school.

Anusara classes are also fluid, safe and joy-filled! Teachers are masterful creators of Shri (beauty) who recognise the divine in each student. So what can you expect in an Anusara Yoga class?

- A heart-orientated and soul-inspiring theme.
- A clear focus on one of the 5 UPAs.
- An effective and creative (yet structured) sequence.
- Clear and uplifting language.

Sarah Powell is a Certified Anusara Yoga Teacher with a passion for teaching spiritually uplifting and inspiring yoga classes and also runs an Anusara 200-hour teacher training course. Find her online at: sarahpowellyoga.co.uk or on Instagram @Sarahpowellyoga

Photos: Andrea Galkova Photography Singapore

Menopause Yoga

Managing menopause symptoms with evidenced-based techniques from the realm of yoga.

By Petra Coveney

What is the menopause? ‘The menopause’ is a medical phrase used to describe the hormonal transition from peri-menopause, when a person’s menstrual bleeds become irregular, to ‘menopause’ which is 12 months without a menstrual bleed.

Some women will transition through this time of life with few symptoms. However, many others struggle with the hormonal instability which can lead to more than 34 symptoms affecting their body, brain and emotional wellbeing. And in post menopause, women benefit from guidance on preventing long term health risks such as osteoporosis, cardio vascular disease, mental health and genitourinary symptoms.

How can yoga help? Hatha yoga, in general, benefits people’s wellbeing, which is why doctors and the British Menopause Society recommend yoga alongside other forms of exercise. But hot yoga can trigger hot flushes, dynamic yoga is too painful if you have joint and muscle pain, and restorative yoga can’t build bone density, balance and muscle strength. This is why yoga teachers may see their students complaining of symptoms and injuries. If we don’t help women modify their yoga practice, they may not come back to classes and may miss the benefits.

Yoga for the menopause

Menopause Yoga is a complete holistic practice that combines western medicine with eastern wellbeing under the umbrella of women’s self-empowerment. It includes different yoga classes with asana, breathing and meditation techniques tailored to alleviate different menopause symptoms.

The aim is to educate and empower people so that they can embrace their menopause as a positive opportunity to improve their health and wellbeing. Each person’s experience of the menopause is individual, however, so here at Menopause Yoga, we provide a simple toolkit of techniques that people can practice at home, or whenever their symptoms arise.

Why do we think it is effective? Because it’s an holistic practice that views the menopause as a biological, psychological, social and spiritual transition. Underpinning the yoga practice is a positive philosophy that reframes the medical term ‘menopause’ as a woman’s 'second spring’ — it is a time of renewal and an opportunity to flourish. This can dramatically change negative feelings about post menopause.

We also talk about the menopause to break the social taboo and normalise it. This can feel liberating and supportive as we share experiences in women’s circles.

Petra Coveney is the founder of Menopause Yoga, which she launched in 2013, and the author of the book Menopause Yoga: A Holistic Guide to Supporting Women on their Menopause Journey (menopause-yoga.com)

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Yoga for Trauma

Yoga for trauma is a specialist approach to make the practice accessible to all.

By Emma Gwillim

The minute you step into a yoga studio or onto your mat, it can signal, Pavlov's dog-style, that it's time to breathe a little deeper, move your body more intentionally, find the busy thoughts slowing down a little. Yoga can be a spring of calm in an ever-busy world. For the one in six people who will experience a common mental health symptom this week (according to the charity Mind), many might turn to yoga — known for its proven benefits for stress management and mental wellbeing, as well as the physical gains.

But that sense of calm is not readily available for everyone. That same studio or mat could be the trigger for challenging emotions and bodily sensations for some. As a body-based practice, yoga is unavailable to those who feel disconnected from their body, or even see their body as an enemy. It prevents them from accessing the many benefits of this ancient practice.

Enter yoga for trauma, a specialist practice that offers a somatic (body-based) approach to healing trauma.

It sees trauma as both the big events often associated with the word 'trauma', but also the more subtle 'little t' trauma events that can accumulate and have lasting impact on the mind, body and emotions. Through this lens, trauma is seen as the patterns we adopted to help us survive and can show up as the more obvious panic attacks or depression, as well as restlessness or fatigue, trouble sleeping, feeling isolated from others, along with a host of other symptoms in body and mind.

The approach of trauma-informed yoga aims to help people find a sense of safety in their body so they can shift out of survival mode, moving gently towards healing. It's often taught one-to-one as an individualised practice or in small groups. While there's no single 'trauma-informed' practice, as an approach it often includes three phases: stabilisation, processing and integration.

Stabilisation focuses on bringing the student into the here and now: it builds a capacity to feel safe, to identify what's happening in the body as a function of the nervous system and offers tools for self-regulation of difficult emotions and sensations.

Unlike a regular yoga class, trauma-informed yoga is student-led. Only once a capacity to feel safe has been established would the student begin to explore postures that could be more triggering. The processing phase creates the opportunity to become aware of any unresolved emotions or survival behaviours. It keeps the student within their 'window of tolerance' — their safe mode — and aims to build resilience.

The final phase of integration is an opportunity for reflection, to bring any growth into conscious awareness. Importantly for the trauma survivor, it empowers the student to make new choices and cultivate more nourishing patterns.

You may also notice trauma-sensitive or trauma-aware yoga appearing on studio schedules and class descriptions. Trauma-informed teachers can adapt 'regular' classes to create a safe, stable environment that feels more accessible to people with a history of trauma.

In both the individual practice and in a class setting, there's a focus on creating an environment that feels predictable and consistent. Simple, habitual practices — such as the lights being dimmed for savasana or the use of props — may be omitted. Hands-on adjustments are not practiced or, if they are, with express consent. The language is invitational, rather than directional, and offers choice. For example, rather than offering specific alignment cues in a pose, a teacher might instead invite a sense of curiosity as to how a pose feels from the student's perspective.

These subtle differences offer a sense of agency to the student, the ability to make choices and take a little control; it rebuilds self-confidence.

Yoga for trauma can be a healing experience as it's known the physical effects can be held in the body long after a traumatic experience has passed. It's important to note that it is a practice that works alongside appropriate talk therapy or medical intervention. Discuss any concerns with your GP.

Emma Gwillim is a yoga teacher, breathwork facilitator, coach and writer. Find her at: emmagwillim.uk or on Instagram @emmagwillim

Zen Ki Yoga

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A powerful, healing yoga derived from Indian, Japanese and other eastern practices

Zen Ki Yoga is a culmination of several different styles of Japanese yoga, Indian yoga, two different styles of shiatsu and 28 years of founder Janie Larmour's experience of working with clients in yoga, personal fitness training and shiatsu.

The practice is heavily steeped in the knowledge of western anatomy combined with ancient energy healing work using the Zen Shiatsu meridians and the principles of yin and yang. While there may be the occasional up dog and down dog, you might end up doing an entire class lying on your back deeply working the core and strengthening the structure around your spine or the individual organs in your digestive, reproductive and circulatory systems.

"You can literally target each organ with a range of specific moves for each of them and you can use other moves to target your meridians to balance the energy flow through them instead of using acupuncture or shiatsu," says Larmour.

It's great for those looking for a practice with self-care, self-love and healing at its heart. "Zen Ki Yoga gives you the power to heal, strengthen and release your body, mind and energy all by yourself. There are 12 meridians and each meridian has anywhere between 10 to 40-plus moves for each, making every single class meaningful, different and rewarding. It can also be used to realign the structure of the body, particularly the spine, posture, hips and neck helping you to get rid of long or short-term aches and pains."

She adds: "Every season, the yoga changes to focus on the meridians that are mostly to bring your body into balance with the changes of the season to keep you in optimum health. Zen Ki Yoga also addresses specific health issues utilising its ability to heal with yoga poses and diet specific to organs and meridians creating the initial imbalance which causes the disease."

As well as general health and wellbeing, she says that the practice has delivered lots of success for students suffering with back pain, knee, hip, shoulder and neck pain, and many other conditions.

People attend Zen Ki Yoga classes for all kinds of reasons: preparation for pregnancy; optimal health during pregnancy; post natal and putting the body back together after birth; sports-specific injuries and rehabilitation; weight loss and metabolism.

Larmour, who also runs teacher trainings in Zen Ki Yoga, says her students have likewise seen improvements in anxiety, panic attacks and stress; chronic fatigue; high blood pressure and heart-related issues; asthma and breathing issues, as well as many other conditions and health concerns.

Discover more about Zen Ki Yoga and its founder Janie Larmour at: thecentreofyoga.com

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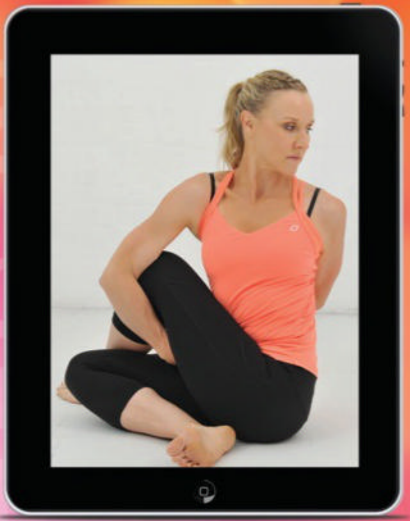

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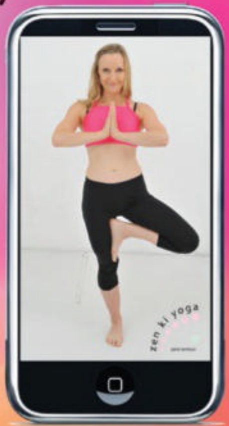

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MAN ON THE MAT

WITH RAVI DIXIT

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UTKATASANA

(CHAIR POSE)

Utkata in Sanskrit means powerful, fierce. This pose brings together the strength of the body and the strength of the mind, creating unity and harmony.

BENEFITS

- Strengthens leg muscles, knees, ankles and spine.
- Stretches the chest and shoulders.
- Stimulates the abdominal organs and diaphragm.
- Increases the heart rate, stimulating blood circulation.
- Builds stamina and endurance, and helps regulate the nervous system.

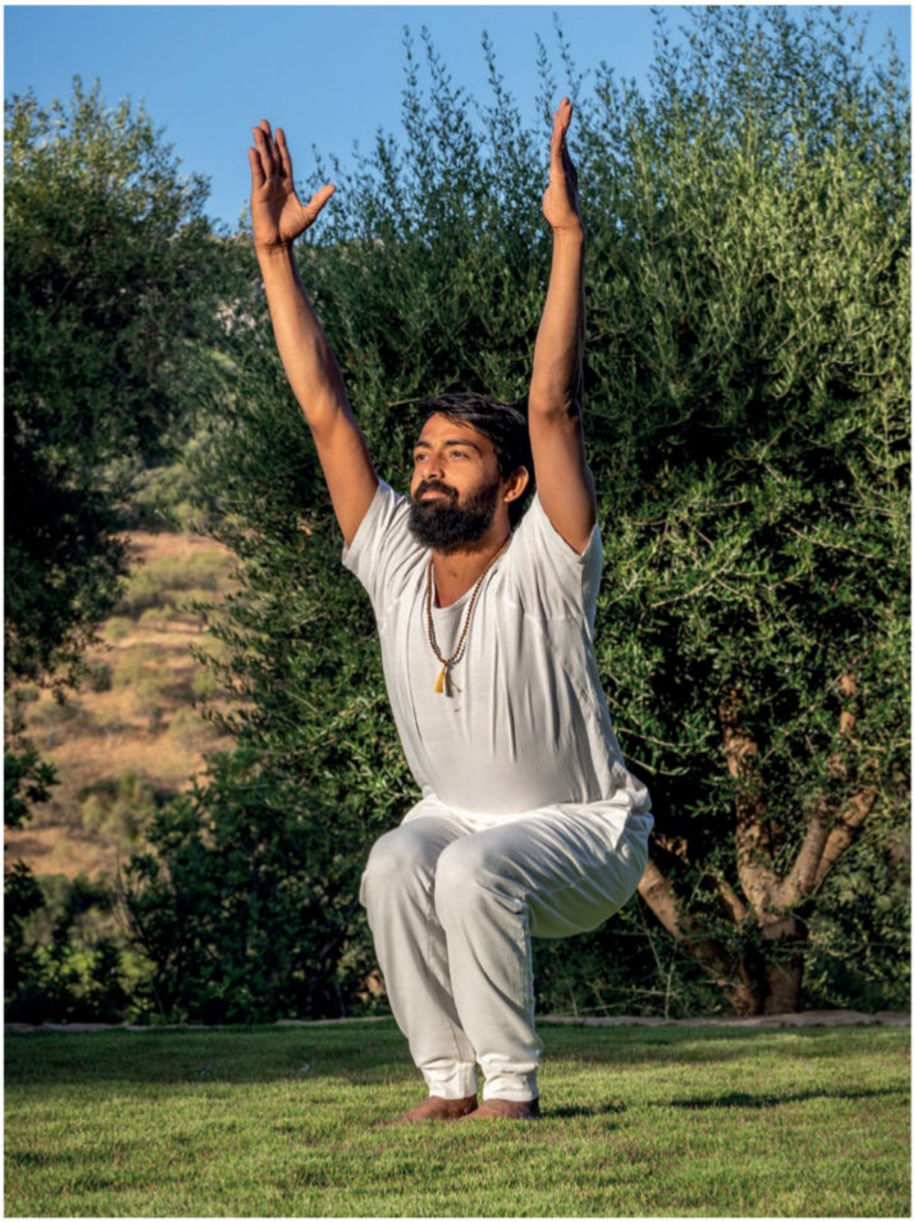

Photo: Jason P. Howe

MISTAKES

- Putting too much weight on the toes. It's important to keep the weight in the heels or you may feel like you're tipping forward. Try lifting the toes off the ground, this will help distribute the weight correctly and help improve balance.
- Tension in the shoulders and crunching them up toward the ears. Relax the shoulders down and away from the ears, elongate the neck and feel the stretch in the shoulders.
- Sticking out the buttocks too much. Keep a straight line between your spine and your buttocks rather than arching or rounding the back. Engage the abdominal muscles, drawing your navel inward.

TIPS

- If keeping your balance is challenging, practice the action of the legs first with your hands on your hips or the back of a chair for support.
- To help with concentration and balance, keep your gaze to a steady point on the floor a few feet away, while keeping the head and neck in line with the rest of the spine.
- If your knees tend to fall open, try holding a block between the thighs. This will ensure correct alignment and protects the knees.

AWARENESS

- This asana requires full body awareness, mental strength, and commitment.
- When you first start practicing Utkatasana, you may only be able to hold it for a short time.

Once you feel more comfortable in this pose, try to hold it a few seconds longer every time you practice.

- Focus on your inner power and breathe deeply but calmly.

Ravi Dixit is an Indian yoga teacher living in London, passionate about making traditional yoga understandable for everyone. Visit: ravi.yoga or connect on Instagram @raviyoga_goa

Transcending MATTERS

Trevor Davy, aka spiritual teacher Tarun Hari Das, talks to OM about how he aims to open up the power of yoga and wellness, as well as the benefits of understanding yogic philosophy, to more people within the uninformed black community of Britain and beyond

Step into a world of positivity and self-discovery with Transcending Matters. It's a UK-based wellbeing firm that believes in empowering individuals to unlock their full potential and 'transcend' to a new level of being, with a focus on the uninformed black community.

Vedanta, yoga and other healing modalities are at its core, says its founder and chief executive, Trevor Davy, aka spiritual teacher Tarun Hari Das. "Our mission is to empower the black community by creating a safe and supportive environment where individuals can engage in a process of self-development and growth with universal principles and structure."

He talked to OM recently about how the company hopes to be a trailblazer for health and wellness among the black community and was excited to present the firm's Way of Life app. As well as offering retreats, meditations and music, the company's app spells out the Transcending Matters philosophy in great detail, all in a digestible, practical way, "taking ancient wisdom and making it applicable to everyday living and self-mastery."

The web-based app (which means it is delivered through a web browser, not downloaded from an app store), instils much of the wisdom that Tarun himself has gleaned through the years.

Yoga has been an important part of his own holistic wellness journey, alongside meditation, pranayama, Tibetan bowls and sound healing. These are all things he now enjoys sharing with others via the Transcending Matters retreats schedule and courses, and of course, via the app.

"Transcending Matters is a company founded by black people, for black people, that provides meditation programmes, spiritual education courses, and retreats all designed to enhance the quality of life and wellbeing of individuals in the black community," he says.

"Our company is dedicated to providing a safe and supportive environment for personal growth and transformation, and we offer a comprehensive suite of services that help individuals achieve inner peace, spiritual growth and personal fulfilment. Our live Zoom spiritual education courses, an app with over 200 hours of spiritual and wellbeing education, and retreat programmes in Portugal are tailored specifically to the needs and experiences of the black community."

Tarun believes that he is targeting a group that has traditionally been less exposed to some of the holistic wellness practices being offered under the Transcending Matters umbrella.

"We understand that the black community faces unique challenges and experiences, and our services are designed to provide individuals with the tools and resources they need to navigate those challenges and achieve a sense of wellbeing and fulfilment. Our team is made up of skilled and highly-trained instructors who understand the nuances of the black experience and are committed to uplifting the community through our various programmes."

> **"Transcending Matters offers a unique and transformative experience for individuals in the black community seeking inner peace, personal growth and spiritual fulfilment"**

Tarun and his team already claim a proud track record of success in helping others to rediscover their true selves, notably through the retreats schedule, where participants get to fully embrace their healing journey in Portugal, among other relaxed locations.

He says that many people first start their journey on the app, before venturing out onto one of the various Transcending Matters retreats or attending its courses.

"We have helped people in many areas of health and wellbeing. Many success stories have unfolded, with the retreats being the highlight of a journey in fully embracing new foundations based on new knowledge acquired."

He claims that these practices have achieved lots of remarkable outcomes. That includes helping people come off oxygen dependency with pranayama sessions, and seeing others cease taking anti-depressant tablets after the firm's courses and meditations.

"Our meditation programmes are designed to help individuals reduce stress, increase mindfulness, and improve overall wellbeing. Our live Zoom spiritual education courses are led by experts in their respective fields and cover a wide range of topics, including mental health, physical health and spiritual growth."

Much of this wisdom and learning is now embedded into the web-based app, as well as there to be experienced in-person during the retreats.

"Our app offers a variety of guided meditations, yoga sessions, and other practices that promote inner peace and wellbeing, while our retreat programmes in Portugal provide a transformative experience that includes yoga, meditation, Thai and Ayurveda massages, Tibetan bowl healing, Sanskrit and Ancient Kemetic studies, NLP group workshops, and more."

For those who have yet to experience the healing powers of yoga and other such therapies, it's a powerful combination with the potential for long-term transformation. "We believe that Transcending Matters offers a unique and transformative experience for individuals in the black community seeking inner peace, personal growth and spiritual fulfilment," says Tarun. ॐ

Explore the world of Transcending Matters at: transcendingmatters.com or sign up to the Way of Life app for a free seven-day taster trial

Embodied Living: Mindfulness & Yoga for Life's Everyday Challenges

Empowered rest

Taking time out to rest can dismantle the structures and expectations which deplete us and empower us to positively change the course of our lives. **By Lauren Bloxham**

Whether it's good for us or not, we all function within the same broad structures that our society imposes. That may be our working hours or week, or the expectations associated with the labels we give ourselves (parent, partner, employee, teacher, leader), or perhaps we are deeply shaped by the expectations that come with religion or gender.

Our humanity may be moulded in many ways, some of which may feel life enhancing, and some may feel limiting. We use structure and expectation as a measure for success, health, a way to judge, to bond, or to separate. Very often, questioning the structures that shape us will lead us to feel vulnerable; whether those structures and expectations are good for us or not, they may still feel safe.

Although we share experiences, workplaces, or yoga classes, we each give and receive something unique and different to those circumstances. Each of us thrives on different aspects of living at different times of our life. Among us we are pregnant, in menopause, living with chronic health conditions, recovering from a virus, caring for sick family, in grief, in celebration. We are new parents and grandparents, we are living and dying, we are calm, anxious, depressed, and joyous, we are religious and agnostic, rich and poor, we are spiritual and cynical, and we are so much more in between.

We are all having such varying experiences of humanity. Some we'll relate to with each other, others we won't even begin to fathom about one another; this is what makes humanity so rich and diverse, so wondrous and so terrifying. Regardless of what phase of life we are in, or what we are going through personally, we are all still functioning within the same structures and expectations that society sets, and often without questioning whether those structures and expectations are truly meeting our needs.

Understanding our needs

Empowering ourselves to know what it is we need can help us to advocate on our own behalf. When we recognise and understand our needs, we can discern what is good for us, what is nourishing and what is depleting. So many of us work from the assumption that we're failing, or that we're not enough. So many of us assume that our discomfort is our own fault. But what if it's the imposed structures and expectations around us that are failing us, and that are not enough? The discomfort we feel can be a valuable signpost towards what it is we deeply, truly need. Recognising it can lead us to being curious about ourselves, and this curiosity or 'svadhyaya' can bring us closer to holding our own power and meeting our own needs.

To recognise a deep need, we need to get deep inside

When we're consumed and controlled by day-to-day responsibilities and obligations, what's expected of us and what we expect of ourselves, then there's barely any time to reflect…to move deep within and to question our exhaustion, our discomfort, and our lack of power in affecting change.

Carving out time for rest and reflection is necessary for all of us in maintaining our wellbeing, in just the same way we know that moving well and eating well is. There isn't a one size fits all approach though, and resting is not a box-ticking exercise.

How to rest and reflect well

We're not taught to advocate for ourselves when it comes to rest, and often a sense of needing permission can be so deeply engrained within us that we overlook our needs in order to serve our expectations.

When we value action so highly, and doing or responding immediately is habitual, it's hard to feel that rest and reflection is valuable time spent. In fact, it can lead us to feeling guilty for taking it, as though it's a luxury we don't truly deserve. It may even feel difficult or unsafe to rest, particularly if we have been experiencing chronic stress. But we each need rest, recovery, and reflection for a unique and diverse range of reasons, and at different times in our lives.

In her 2021 TED talk Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith explored the seven types of rest that every person needs:

Physical Rest: More sleep, naps, deep breaths, relaxation.
Mental Rest: Music, meditation, silence.
Emotional Rest: Offloading baggage, talking to a good listener, therapy.
Social Rest: Catching up with friends or time by yourself.
Creative Rest: Reading a book, taking a walk in nature.
Spiritual Rest: Doing things that give you a sense of meaning and purpose.
Sensory Rest: Turning off devices and screens, find the quiet.

Dr. Dalton-Smith goes on to explore that when we can identify our rest deficit, we can administer the appropriate type of rest we need.

Finding empowered rest

Come to a comfortable laying or seated position. Place the left hand on the heart and the right hand on the belly. Close the eyes and invite forward three deep, slow breaths. As you breathe, settle into the support of the earth and allow the inner awareness to withdraw from the world outside and rest at the heart space. Awaken a sense of thankfulness within the heart for anything, however simple, that comes to mind. Thankfulness softens the heart and allows our inner wisdom to pour forward.

Let awareness take in the physical body, its sensations and feedback from the tips of the toes to the crown of the head. Listening this way can help us to understand the condition of the physical body and its needs for recovery, rest, stillness, movement, or sleep. Awareness can take in the moving breath, the bridge between the inner and outer experiences, moving us towards the innate pace and rhythm of our lives…breath awareness can clear space to take in the qualities of the mind. Thoughts will inevitably arise and fall away; like weather, they're sometimes heavy and dark, sometimes light and bright, sometimes invasive or persistent. The qualities of our minds can lead us to feeling and understanding our need for working through difficult situations and strong emotion. Our needs for support, to talk, to share and to negotiate.

Bring the awareness back to the breath, the innate pace and rhythm that is unique to you. Take in the heart space again and ask the question: 'What is my deepest need?' Let the heart take its time to answer. Sometimes answers arise in the form of words, feelings, images, or memories. Often, they come with an awakening of the exact rest medicine we need. The word 'peace' awakening the feeling and memory of peace. An image of laughing with friends awakening the joy of being social with the people we love. The feeling of space allowing us to take a deeper breath and surrender deeper physical tension. The memory of a time or place may lead us towards a feeling that we need more of. Spending time being curious about ourselves, our bodies, our minds, our breath, how we feel and the space we take up is rest in itself. It's one of the greatest gifts we can offer ourselves.

The awakening of the heart's medicine is as unique and attuned to our individual needs as can be. It's the very first step in carving out a courageous path towards empowered rest, leading us to make discerning choices about how we spend time, where, who with and when we need to withdraw in order to strengthen our spirits and find deep and lasting respite.

Practice yoga with Lauren Bloxham online at: blackdogliving.com or connect on Instagram @blackdogliving

A healing journey

Finding your way out of PTSD: a healing journey through to the other side. **By Mary Firestone**

Post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, can be a sneaky beast. Even with my background — I have a Master's degree in clinical psychology and have been leading healing retreats for a decade — it snuck up and surprised me.

Trauma can be so shocking that we might not even notice that we are stuck in a state of hyper-vigilance that can lead to sleep and digestion disruption, acute sensitivity to sound, the perception that danger lurks around every corner, and panic attacks. At least that is what PTSD looked like for me!

And yet, I was so functional. Following the trauma of surviving a mudslide that left me trapped for five hours, my house destroyed, and the death of many neighbours, I was dealing with things. Well, I had to. I was pregnant with my second child, had a four-year-old son to care for, insurance claims to manage, and housing to find during a housing shortage.

> "Healing can be a circuitous journey that is ongoing and looks different for everyone. It can also feel like a wave with dips and setbacks along the way."

The healing journey

I knew enough to know that I needed help healing, the sooner the better, and began with Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) and cranial sacral therapy. Those therapies lifted a layer of trauma residue fairly immediately. They helped me begin to break the trauma loop I was unconsciously stuck in — telling the same story, replaying the event, and continuing to retraumatise myself.

In identifying that there is something to heal, even if we're not conscious of what it is, we take the first step in bringing to light what needs composting and integration.

Healing can be a circuitous journey that is ongoing and looks different for everyone. It can also feel like a wave with dips and setbacks along the way. These dips can feel frustrating and yet I've found that if I'm gentle with myself and treat these sensations as opportunities to heal further, I do much better. The healing peaks are also that much sweeter!

All of this healing work led me to a fuller, more visceral appreciation of life because of what I had been through and healed.

This awareness and appreciation are some of the greatest gifts of my life. When we're brought face to face with our mortality, which is my definition of trauma, upon healing there can be a tremendous feeling of connection to others and nature. Gratitude for beauty in people and the world.

Yoga & travel

One of the first ways I began to heal and appreciate the world was through travel. The act of immersing myself in another environment, soaking up a new landscape, culture, and a setting devoid of my usual 'have to's' allowed me to relax, reset, heal, and awaken to parts of myself and the world. Often, I gravitate to places that have natural healing properties infused with the ions from the salt water, the dry mineral-rich heat of the desert, and the palpable healing traditions of Greece, Montana, or Belize infused throughout the culture. I often seek out the local healers in a place — a shaman in the Arizona desert, a medicine woman in Bali, a lomi lomi masseuse in Hawaii. On a recent trip to Zihuatanejo, Mexico, I had the lovely experience of staying at Playa Viva.

This is a property that has embraced and healed the land, so much so that it has the highest environmental rating bestowed upon hotels. The magnificent open-air architectural treehouses on the wild beach offer one way to fuse with the healing energy of the land. Playa Viva also offers daily yoga each morning at 8 am in two stunning yoga shalas on the beach. As part of my healing on this recent trip included not setting any alarms and catching up on sleep, I missed the group morning class. Instead, each day, I went down to these yoga pavilions and practiced alone. I led myself through my own healing flows and postures, listening to myself, and my body, trusting my own internal knowing.

Listening in

In everyday life, we often don't make the time to turn inwards and listen to what our minds and bodies are telling us. This seems to me to be the first and most important place to begin to find our way out of the darkness of PTSD: to find ourselves. To know ourselves.

> "In everyday life, we often don't make the time to turn inwards and listen to what our minds and bodies are telling us. This seems to me to be the first and most important place to begin to find our way out of the darkness of PTSD: to find ourselves. To know ourselves."

We can't possibly find our way through to the other side if we don't even know where, or who, we are. There has been much made in recent years about 'finding yourself' and 'finding your purpose' — these are grand sweeping assertions designed to feel overwhelming and impossible, or like you need to immediately sign up for the eight-week course for $800 to discover who you are.

It is much easier and simpler than that! You already know who you are. You have all of the answers within you. To all of it, including your own healing and your way through the aftermath of trauma to greater joy. All you have to do is make some time to listen.

Mary Firestone is the author of 'Trusting the Dawn: How to Choose Joy and Freedom After Trauma' (Sounds True Publishing), the story of her trauma and survival during the 2017 California wildfires and subsequent 2018 mudslide which took her brand new family home — and her transformation through healing. Out now. ॐ

Four ways to practice the art of surrender

How yoga teachings can help us during our moments of surrender.

By Angie Follensbee-Hall

When my daughter was three years old and nearly died, I experienced a brief moment of complete surrender.

I watched as her organs slowly shut down, her body as it paled and withered; I heard her screams of pain in protest. I didn't know what to do anymore, it was all too overwhelming. I just said to whatever higher powers existed: If you need to take her now, please do. This pain is too much for any of us, especially her, to bear. I let go of all my mothering ego needs in that moment.

Luckily, she survived. Sometimes I do have guilt over that moment. Why didn't I hold onto the mental fight?

I am not saying that had the outcome been different, I wouldn't have had resentment, anger, depression, fear, and a host of other emotions or forms of resistance. And I am certainly grateful every moment of every day, that she pulled through. She is a beautiful gift in my life. In many ways that time made me appreciate my family, the present moment, and the many joys of life.

But that one moment of absolute surrender was very clear to me.

The last of the five Niyamas is the concept of Isvara Pranidhana. The word 'Pranidhana' means a complete letting go of the ego self; no expectations, no goals, no attachments. Very loosely translated, 'Isvara' means 'higher self', or god.

Alberto Villoldo translates sutra 1.23 as follows:

Surrender completely to Spirit
and attain Samadhi.
Spirit is the Supreme Self,
the primordial yogi, untouched by
karma, free from desire, all knowing.

I have found that sometimes Isvara Pranidhana can be difficult for some western minds to understand. The two struggles I have seen are: Isvara — the concept of god as is described here, and the the negative connotations of surrender — Pranidhana.

Isvara: a closer look

The Yoga Sutras presuppose this concept of the divine. One doesn't need to believe in a specific god to understand these concepts, but one should have a general belief that there is a higher purpose at work in the world. Yes, one can be an atheist and also practice yoga for its benefits of better understanding one's self, for personal and community growth, and for maintaining health and wellness. However, the true origins of the practice arise from the belief in a divine force at work in our lives.

But yoga doesn't prescribe what that divine force should be for you. The openness to all religions is one of the hallmarks of the yoga practice, and of yoga sutras. The great avatara Sri Anandamayima said: "Whether you worship Christ, Krishna, Kali or Allah, you actually worship the one Light that is also in you, since It pervades all things." This belief in a oneness of the divine force or higher Self is the fundamental basis of yoga in general and of this niyama. All human explanations of the divine are simply variations of this one unified source.

Essential to understanding this sutra is the belief that the divine means many different things to many different people, and interpretation of the divine is very personal. There is no intention to negate another person, or another culture's, viewpoint, perspective, or description of the divine in these teachings.

Basically, the Yoga Sutras leaves the divine to your own interpretation.

Pranidhana: supreme surrender

Surrender is sometimes understood to mean a personal weakness or to give up on something. In terms of battle, conflict, or competition, to surrender is to lose. But surrender in this context involves releasing your expectations about what should be. Surrender means recognising that you cannot control every outcome, no matter the effort you put into something.

To experience the fullness and the truth of freedom means to let go of your rigidity, your expectation, and your need to control. When you learn to stop fighting the events of your life, both physically and mentally, then you begin to step into Pranidhana, the supreme surrender.

The yoga sutras do not say "give up and don't do anything."

No, not at all.

Yoga is action. Yoga is discipline. Yoga is establishing your values, dedicating yourself to your work, and doing the best you can in any moment. What the yoga sutras are telling you to do is to let go of what you think is supposed to happen when you do that work, because you can only control your own actions, you cannot control the outcomes or the actions of others.

> "Surrender asks us to be strong enough to engage each moment with integrity while being soft enough to flow with the current of life."

This is difficult for us goal-oriented doers! But having rigid expectations about the outcome of any action only brings in contraction, tightness, anger, and frustration when things don't go our way (and they often don't go our way!). The reminder here is that holding onto expectations will only cause suffering. This points back to the concept of Isvara, the divine. There is a higher self that understands the full workings of the universe better than we individual humans do.

Deborah Adele states in her book, The Yamas and Niyamas: "Surrender asks us to be strong enough to engage each moment with integrity while being soft enough to flow with the current of life."

Sometimes we need to be pushed into a corner before we realise there is only surrender, like I was in the hospital with my daughter so many years ago. But if we are lucky, we can glean understanding from the wise teachings of the yoga sutras. If we study these teachings, meditate on them, and apply them in our lives, we can better prepare for all that life might offer us on this learning path.

Here are four more ways to practice Isvara Pranidhana: the Supreme Surrender:

1. Spend time by yourself. This can look like a lot of different things, but try to do it without electronics.

2. Talk or write to yourself. Journal what is on your mind without censorship.

3. Be gentle with yourself. This is a practice, not a perfect!

4. Practice gratitude directed toward yourself, and practice gratitude toward your life experiences. They offer rich learning opportunities at every corner.

When have you experienced moments of surrender? How have they offered you new insight into your lived experience? ॐ

Angie Follensbee-Hall is a yoga teacher, artist, and lifestyle coach with over 20 years teaching experience. To learn more, visit her website at: angiefollensbeehall.com

Photos: Sage Harple

Don’t let a fear of dying stop you from living

Learning how to live well, to serve others and to enjoy the present moment, can help to free us from a life of fear. **By Lianna Champ**

If your life was a car, you wouldn’t let anyone else grab the steering wheel — but that is exactly what you are doing when you carry fear, whether it is a fear of dying, death, or of something else.

Fear stops us experiencing life in the present moment. And, when it’s too late, more often than not we have the realisation of the time and opportunities wasted.

We live. We die. Fact. So, what is it that makes the thought of dying so terrifying and how can we use that fear as a springboard to finding more joy and purpose in life?

It is said that to die well you must live well. And that doesn’t mean that just by being good you will die pain-free; it means that when your ending comes, you are ready because you have lived your truth, loved wholeheartedly and have done a good day’s work.

How do we live well?

To live well, we need to create purpose in our lives. My mum always advised that each day we live we must serve our fellow man, whether by doing charity work or running a corporation. It gives us a sense of duty and usefulness and takes us out of ourselves because our consideration is for others.

This is how we start to live a good life — and it makes us feel better about ourselves. It creates a circle within us. The better we feel, the more we want to do for others and the more we do, the more we can.

Take a moment to think about the happiest people you know, and you will see that they have one thing in common — they are doing something they love with or for others.

In my work, I meet people from all walks of life. Some accept death without raising an eyebrow, others actively engage in healthy activities to postpone it for as long as they can. Some keep an eye on it, making promises to be better in the future. Some are terrified at the very thought of dying.

But is it the thought of dying or is it more about what is being left behind? If you were given a date for your death, there are things you know you need to do before that day arrived. It could be worrying about how your family will cope. If so, prepare them. Teach them practical skills. Teach them how to share their feelings

with each other. Teach them the value of life. Teach them that it isn't how long we live that's important but what we do with the time we have. If you have committed a wrongdoing and still carry some residue, find a way so you can make your peace with it.

> "By grasping that both ageing and dying are an inescapable truth then we can really focus on what really matters — the people in our lives, fun, laughter and most importantly, living for the day."

Removing the thorns

If you were to turn each of your fears of dying (and don't kid yourself that it is just a fear of dying — it's always a fear of something else) into thorns and stuck each one in the heel of your foot some of them would be more painful than others.

Start with the most painful one. Identify the fear and you will find the solution. It is always handy to write these down on paper and you may be shocked at what you uncover. Only by removing all the thorns will you start to remove your fear of dying and know the things you need to do to throw that duvet back and bring the day on.

As human beings we never stay in one state, and we constantly fluctuate. Holding onto the things and actions that make us feel good keeps us motivated to live well.

Most of us feel apprehensive when we think about dying, but it's what we do whilst we are alive that brings peace at the end. If we can say on our death bed that we really lived, then we can die knowing that we are ready to hand over to those who follow.

By really grasping that both ageing and dying are an inescapable truth then we can really focus on what really matters — the people in our lives, fun, laughter and most importantly, living for the day.

Lianna Champ has over 40 years' experience as a grief and funeral care specialist and is the author of the practical guide, How to Grieve Like A Champ, out now.

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Plantifully Lean

Delicious and healthy plant-based recipes and inspiration from the gorgeous book, Plantifully Lean by Kiki Nelson

Chocolate "Nice Cream"

MAKES 2 CUPS

All you need for this are a food processor, a few frozen bananas, and a little imagination. This "nice cream" is chocolaty and totally hits the spot.

- 4 medium bananas, peeled and frozen
- 60ml (¼ cup) plain, unsweetened plant-based milk (see note)
- 3 tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 tsp pure vanilla extract

1. In a food processor or high-speed blender, combine the bananas, milk, cocoa powder, and vanilla. Process until smooth. Serve immediately or store in a freezer-safe container in the freezer for up to 1 week.

NOTE: I like using almond milk for this, or use a plant-based milk with around 30 calories per cup.

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Shiitake Rice with Bok Choy and Thai Peanut Sauce

SERVES 2

Sometimes simple meals are the most delicious meals, and this is one of those. If you don't have time to make the peanut dressing or if it's just not your thing, just add some coconut aminos teriyaki sauce on top, and it'll be every bit as delicious!

- 900g (2lb) baby bok choy, ends trimmed
- 225g (8oz) shiitake mushrooms, sliced
- 1kg (4 cups) white or brown rice, cooked
- ¼ cup Thai Peanut Sauce (recipe follows) or coconut aminos teriyaki sauce
- 2 green onions, white and green parts sliced
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh cilantro leaves

1. In a large nonstick pan, combine the bok choy and mushrooms. Cook over medium heat until softened and tender, adding a splash of water to the pan if necessary, about 3 minutes.

2. Divide the rice between two bowls and top with the sauteed veggies, peanut sauce or coconut aminos, green onions, and cilantro, then serve.

Thai Peanut Sauce

Makes 5 tablespoons

- 150g (½ cup) powdered peanut butter
- 2 tbsp pure maple syrup, or 4 drops stevia
- 1 tbsp fresh lime juice
- 1 tbsp low-sodium soy sauce
- ½ tsp oil-free chili paste (I like sambal oelek; optional)
- ⅛ tsp ground ginger
- ⅛ tsp toasted sesame oil (optional)

1. In a medium bowl, combine the powdered peanut butter, maple syrup, lime juice, soy sauce, chili paste (if using), ginger, and sesame oil (if using). Add 3 tablespoons water and whisk well to combine. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.

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Sweet Potato with Curry-Roasted Chickpeas

SERVES 1

This simple combination of sweet potato topped with curry-roasted chickpeas and arugula and drizzled with vegan Caesar dressing is absolutely delicious—the flavours just pop in your mouth!

- 1 medium sweet potato
- 20g (1 cup) packed arugula (rocket)
- ½ cup Curry-Roasted Chickpeas (recipe follows)
- ¼ cup Caesar Dressing (recipe follows)

1. Preheat the oven to 220°C/425°F/Gas 7. Prick the top of the potato with a fork, place on a baking sheet, and roast for 40 to 50 minutes, until you can easily pierce it with a knife.
2. Slice the potato in half lengthwise and top each half evenly with the arugula, chickpeas, and dressing.

Curry Roasted Chickpeas

- 1 (400g/15oz) can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 ½ tsp curry powder
- ½ tsp garlic powder
- ¼ tsp onion powder
- ¼ tsp sea salt, plus more as needed
- Avocado oil cooking spray

1. Preheat the oven or air fryer to 220°C/425°F/Gas 7. If roasting in the oven, line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a medium bowl, season the chickpeas with the curry powder, garlic powder, onion powder, and salt.
3. Toss to coat well.
4. Spread the chickpeas over the prepared baking sheet or in the basket of the air fryer and lightly spray with avocado oil. Cook for 10 to 13 minutes, until the chickpeas are golden and crispy. Taste and adjust the seasoning with more salt, if needed. Serve hot or at room temperature as a snack or salad topping.
5. Store leftovers in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 2 days.

Caesar Dressing

- 240ml (1 cup) plain, unsweetened plant-based milk (see note)
- 70g (½ cup) raw unsalted cashews
- 2 tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 1 tbsp whole-grain mustard or Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp capers in brine, plus 2 tsp of their brine
- ¾ tsp sea salt, plus more as needed
- ½ tsp garlic powder or minced fresh garlic
- ¼ tsp onion powder
- ⅛ tsp vegan Worcestershire sauce
- ⅛ tsp freshly ground black pepper, plus more as needed

1. In a blender, combine the milk, cashews, lemon juice, mustard, capers, caper brine, salt, garlic powder, onion powder, and Worcestershire sauce. Blend until smooth and creamy. Mix in the pepper, taste, and adjust the seasonings if needed.
2. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

NOTE: A thicker plant-based milk is what makes this dressing thick and creamy. If you can't find a thicker milk, use your favourite plain, unsweetened plant-based milk and add an extra 35g (¼ cup) cashews to thicken (this will only change the calories per tablespoon by about 5 calories). If you want an even thicker dressing, use less milk.

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5

foods to eat for a healthy gut

Treat your tummy: Five easy ways to be good to your gut

According to data from Google Trends, searches for 'gut health' have increased by 205% in the USA over the last five years.

An unhealthy gut can contribute to several health problems, including diabetes, high blood pressure, and even anxiety. Adding gut-healthy foods into your diet can be a great way to combat a wide range of health problems.

However, are you confused about which foods to eat to improve your gut health? Well, health experts at superfood supplement store Human Tonik (*humantonik.com*) have revealed five foods that can contribute to a healthier gut, as well as the signs and symptoms to look out for to spot an unhealthy gut.

1. Ginger

Ginger is a superfood that has many surprising health benefits. It can help with digestion, reduce heartburn and even promote weight loss. However, ginger can also be used to provide relief for an upset stomach and other digestive issues and support a healthy gut.

Gingerol, a natural compound found in fresh ginger, is packed with anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties that can help restore gut balance. Ginger also helps promote digestion, meaning food doesn't linger around in your gut for an extended period.

There are plenty of ways to add ginger to your diet. Add chopped ginger to your tea or hot water in the mornings. You can also blend it into a smoothie. If you'd rather take supplements, ginger capsules can be taken daily to improve gut health.

2. Bananas

Bananas are another food that can contribute to improved gut health. Bananas contain a fibre called inulin, a substance that stimulates the growth of good bacteria in the gut. Inulin is a prebiotic that can help develop a microbiome and provide fuel for good bacteria to live in your gut. Eating inulin-rich foods can help your bacteria perform activities that keep your gut healthy.

Bananas are also a rich source of fructooligosaccharides, which act as a probiotic and promote the growth of good bacteria in the digestive tract, which ultimately helps with digestion.

The carbohydrates in bananas are also easily broken down. The fruit is gentle enough to be eaten if you are suffering from stomach ailments, and it restores lost electrolytes back into the body. Eating one or two bananas a day can seriously improve gut health.

3. Yoghurt

Yoghurt is probably the first food you think of when it comes to gut health. Rich in probiotics, which are live microorganisms that keep the gut microbiome healthy, yoghurt can help with gut issues such as bloating.

Having a proper balance of bacteria in your gut improves digestion and can block dangerous organisms that can cause infections and boosts your immune system. Foods such as yoghurt can also help your body absorb vital nutrients from food.

However, not all yoghurt is live with probiotics, so be sure to read the label and search for ones that contain live bacteria. High-protein yoghurt with minimal sugar is the best.

4. Lentils

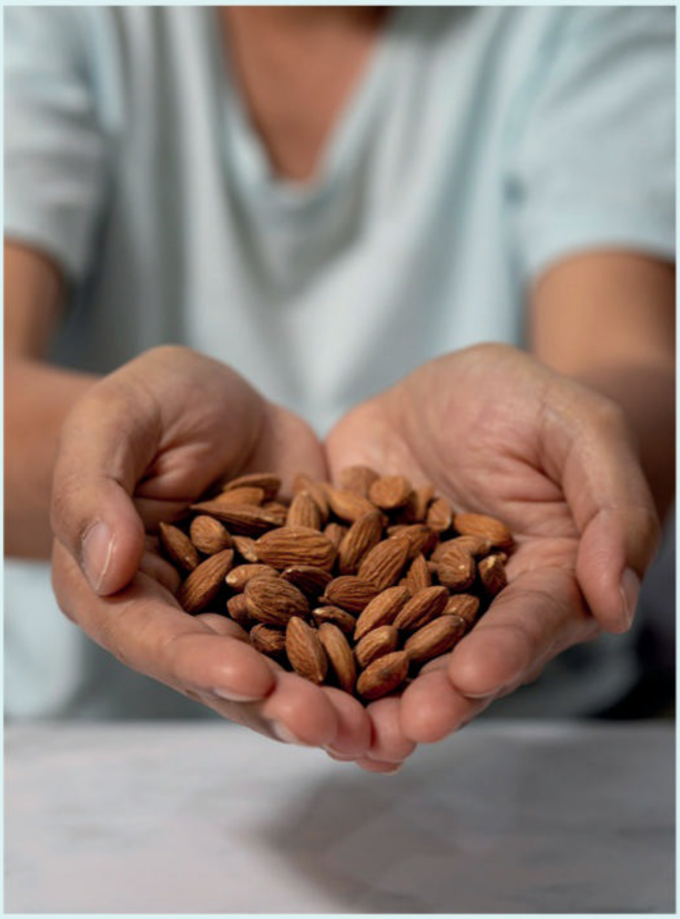
Lentils are a versatile food rich in nutrients such as iron, B vitamins, magnesium, potassium, and zinc, as well as resistant starches, which are brilliant for gut health.

Resistant starches are carbohydrates that do not break down into sugar and are not absorbed by the small intestine. They pass through most of the digestive system unchanged, usually fermenting in the colon. They then decrease the pH level in the colon to help create an environment where beneficial bacteria thrive.

There are many ways to add lentils to your diet. You can add them to your soup, pasta, and salads. You can also bake them with chicken or fish in the oven or simply serve them as a side dish.

5. Almonds

Almonds are high in fibre, which can increase the production of butyrate, a short-chain fatty acid that promotes gut health. Eating a handful of almonds a day can positively affect our overall gut health.



Butyrate is produced by gut bacteria and supports digestive health. It promotes the growth of villi, microscopic extrusions that line the intestines, and enhances the production of mucin, a gel-like substance that coats the inside of the gut and keeps it healthy.

However, it should also be noted that almonds are high fat, so while a handful of almonds a day is recommended for gut health, be sure only to eat them in moderation. Adding almonds to your breakfast smoothies or yogurt is a great way to get them into your diet. ॐ

Signs and symptoms of an unhealthy gut

If you're wondering if you could improve your gut health, the team at Human Tonik has also revealed the signs and symptoms of an unhealthy gut. If you regularly experience any of these symptoms, you could try adding some gut-healthy foods to your diet:

1. **Upset stomach:** this could include gas, bloating, and even heartburn.
2. **Unexplained weight changes:** gaining or losing weight. An imbalanced gut can make it difficult for your body to regulate blood sugar and store fat.
3. **Fatigue:** Poor gut health can cause broken sleep cycles, which may cause extreme tiredness.
4. **Skin issues:** Poor gut health can contribute to eczema, psoriasis, acne other skin conditions.

Fuel your fitness

Experts reveal the answers to the most Googled questions about fitness, workouts and nutrition

If you're into one of the more strenuous yoga styles and take your fitness seriously then you probably already know a thing or two about how to fuel your sweat sesh.

But if you're new to some of the high-octane yoga workouts out there, then it can be a little confusing as to when and what to eat and drink before and after a class.

That's true for other high-intensity workouts too, from strength training at the gym to competitive rowing on the Thames.

There's plenty you can teach yourself about fitness, and doing so is not only useful for beginners. Even if you're experienced in working out, learning more about exercise and nutrition can improve your routine to see results faster or even fix bad habits that you may have picked up.

However, it can sometimes feel like there's so much you need to know that you don't know where to begin.

Fortunately, sports nutrition experts Bulk (*bulk.com*) have conducted research to discover the most Googled questions about fitness and workouts and provided some insight to help you navigate the maze and reach your fitness goals.

"Working out goes so much further than just showing up at the gym," said a spokesperson for Bulk. "If you're eager to reach your fitness goals, it's important to know everything from nutrition to the suggested exercise duration, but it's understandable that it can seem overwhelming. It's crucial to try to educate yourself on the ins and outs so that each workout is successful."

What to eat before a workout?

"What to eat before a workout?" takes the top spot as the most searched for question around fitness. It's recommended to eat around two or three hours before exercising, particularly if you plan on completing a long workout. Eating a meal with protein before a workout can increase muscle protein synthesis, where your cells produce protein.

In addition, carbohydrates also give your body the fuel it needs to exercise, especially for high intensity exercises, so wholegrain pasta or wholewheat toast might be things to include in your pre-workout meal.

However, it's not always practical to eat that length of time before exercising, for example if you like to have an early morning session before work, so a small portion of Greek yoghurt with wholegrain cereal will give your body both protein and carbs without leaving you feeling sluggish.

> "Learning more about exercise and nutrition can improve your routine to see results faster, or even fix bad habits that you may have picked up."

What is pre-workout?

"What does pre-workout do?" and "What is pre-workout?" take the second and third spots, respectively in the Google search lists. Pre-workout is a supplement usually taken by strength and endurance athletes to boost energy, improve workout performance and promote muscle growth. Common ingredients include caffeine, carbohydrates, creatine monohydrate, and it can be taken as pills, powders to mix with a drink, or even be combined with protein supplements.

Pre-workout should be consumed between 30-60 minutes before you workout – doing so will give you more energy to exercise harder and longer, and it can also help to build your muscles if that's what you're after.

What to eat after a workout?

"What to eat after a workout" is the fourth most Googled search term around working out.

Protein is the most important nutrient to consume after a workout to increase muscle mass; that's especially true if your workouts consist of lots of heavy lifting and strength training. Your body needs lots of protein to build and repair tissues in order to continue to grow them. For optimal results, try to consume a protein supplement or high-protein foods between 15 minutes to an hour after your workout, which is known to be the anabolic window (the short time after exercise when your body is repairing and recovering).

It's also important to keep in mind that 2.2 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight is the daily recommended amount of the nutrient to gain muscle. Consuming carbohydrates with protein after working out will also help to speed up recovery and replenish the muscle glycogen that you burned during exercise.

How many exercises per workout?

"How many exercises per workout?" takes the fifth spot for most searched questions regarding fitness. This one's more specific to weight training. The recommended number of exercises per workout ranges between four to eight, with each exercise consisting of two or three sets of eight to 10 reps, but there are circumstances that can determine how many you do. For example, if you are training both upper and lower body on the same day, you may complete four exercises for each muscle group equating to eight in total, but if you are just focusing on legs it may be four overall. It is also worth considering that fewer reps with a high weight are better for building strength and muscle mass while more reps of a lower weight are suggested for muscle endurance.

How many times a week should I workout?

"How many times a week should I workout?" places sixth on the list of the most Googled questions about fitness. A minimum of 150 minutes of moderate activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity is recommended to stay in good health, with that being spread over four to five days or even every day. However, it ultimately comes down to your fitness goals and what exercises you plan on doing. For example, if you wish to train both upper and lower body, as well as doing cardio, you may find yourself working out every day and doing several hours of exercise each week. The beauty of a yoga practice, of course, is that it is a workout for the whole body (as well as being good for the mind and soul too). If it's strength training you're going for, the Bulk experts reckon you should ideally train each muscle group between two and three days a week and wait at least 48 hours before training the same area again. And it's important to remember that it isn't advised to focus on the same muscle group every day as it could result in exhaustion, soreness, and injury.

TEACHER ZONE

A deeper understanding of yoga... for teachers, by teachers

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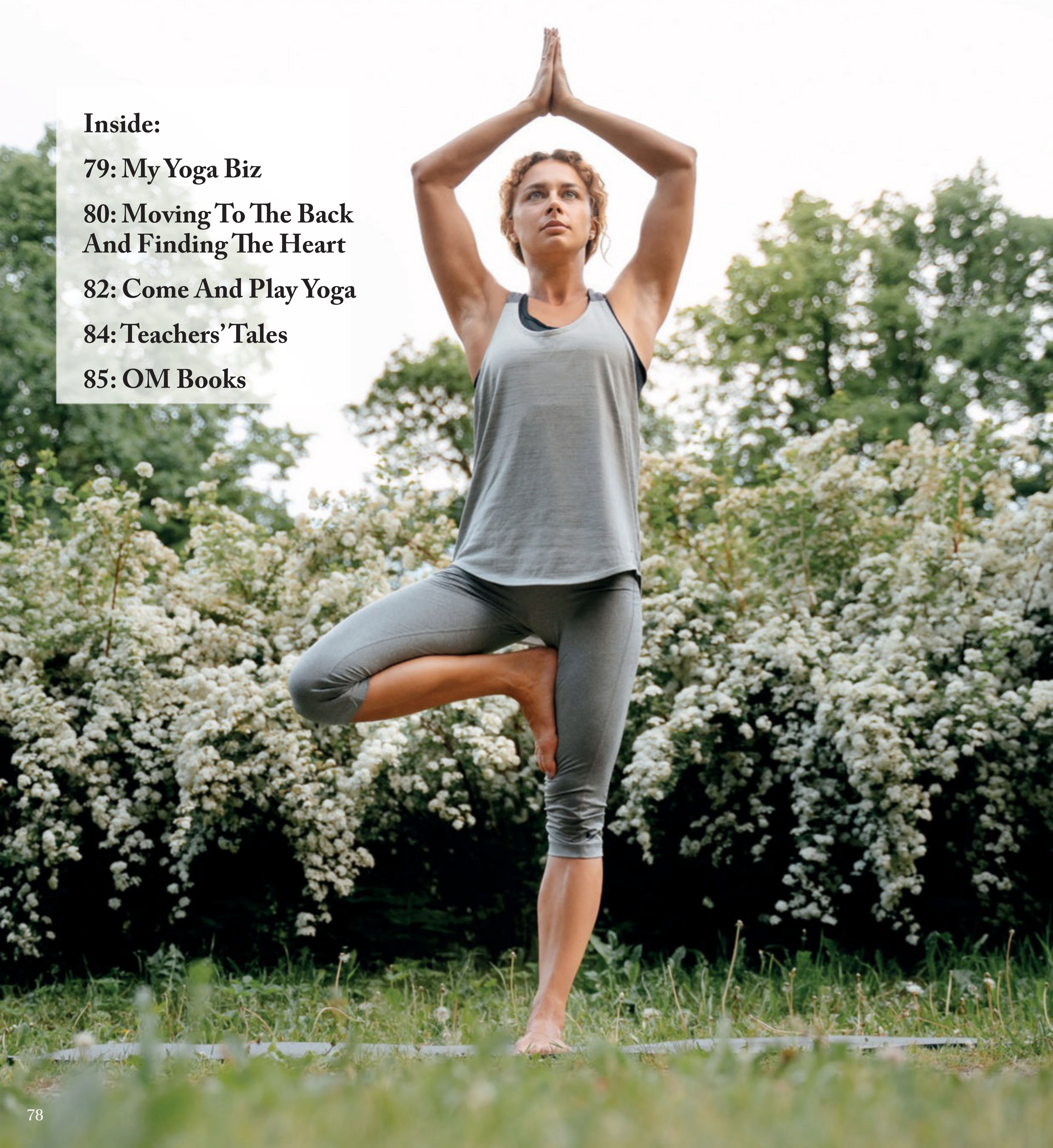


MyYogaBiz

Tips from the experts to help you grow the yoga business of your dreams

THIS MONTH'S MENTOR:

Nicola Barnes, 50, NKB Holistic and Yoga (nkbholisticandyoga.com)

NKB
HOLISTIC

Does a YTT set you up for running a business?

I completed a 200hr YTT but this was just the start of a huge learning process that I'm still going through! The course had a short module on running a business but it was not comprehensive, so I've had to teach myself about financial management, marketing, pricing and so on. I firmly believe it would be worthwhile for yoga training providers to bring in specialists in those areas to help those setting up to avoid the common pitfalls.

What's your niche?

Inclusivity. I believe that practicing yoga can be beneficial to everyone and I'm passionate about introducing the benefits to people who might never have thought to try it. I try to keep my classes friendly and informal, and I'm pleased with the diversity of students that I've managed to attract, across all age groups – including many men! I design my classes to focus on functional movement, helping clients to maintain flexibility, mobility and balance, all attributes that will help them in their everyday lives. As a keen sportsperson, I'm also interested in the benefits yoga can offer athletes. I studied with Sarah Ramsden to become an accredited teacher in Yoga for Sports and Athletes, and am expanding this area of my business, offering one-to-one teaching and group sessions with local sports clubs.

What's the secret to making a living?

I think it's difficult to make a living from yoga alone. It's hard finding affordable premises that allow me to keep my classes at an accessible price. To help with this, I use community facilities where possible. As well as keeping costs down, this has the additional benefit of placing my classes in a non-intimidating environment at the heart of the community, encouraging people to come along and give yoga a go. In addition to yoga, I'm also a qualified reflexologist, specialising in fertility, pregnancy and menopause. I find it fulfilling to help clients in these areas, and it provides me with a valuable second income stream.

Social media?

I own up to being a complete novice at the outset, but I knew that I had to become more social media savvy. I looked at what other teachers had done and tried to pick the best ideas from their sites. I started small and have gradually improved and developed my website to explain the services I offer. The website generates lots of enquiries, and I'm adding to it all of the time, looking for ways to keep it fresh and engaging.

Self-care tips?

It's so important to keep things in balance. I'm a keen triathlete and so I need to keep my energy levels up as I train and prepare for competitions. I've learned that there are only so many classes that you can teach without the sheer physicality becoming detrimental to your own health, so I've scaled back and rearranged my schedule to ensure that I don't burn myself out. And, of course, I attend yoga classes myself!

Future trends?

We live in a world which changes so quickly. We're emerging from a global health emergency, we have an ageing population, and the pace of life has never been faster. I think there is a growing realisation of the physical, mental and spiritual benefits that complementary therapies such as yoga can bring. The fundamentals of yoga are centuries old and will remain the same — it's up to us as yoga instructors to adapt and evolve our services to meet the changing demands of our clients in the modern world.

Written and compiled by Claudia Brown (yogabyclaudia.com)

Moving to the *back* and finding the *heart*

Backbending is at the heart of yoga practice because it helps open and align the six major chakras along the spine — but simple backbends are all that is necessary, writes Chris Livanos. A well-designed practice involves not simply bending the spine, but opening the entire front body, including muscles such as the hip flexors, which are often neglected

> *"You are only as young as your spine is flexible."*

When I first heard this saying, I figured I must be about 500 years old. That would make me a vampire, which would be kind of cool if true, but the saying is misleading at best. It has nonetheless found its way into the yoga community. In general, most yoga teachers and practitioners have the wisdom to realise you do not need extreme flexibility to have a strong yoga practice, but somehow this quote finds its way into the mouths and keyboards of people who ought to know better. Imagine substituting 'spine' with 'hamstrings', 'shoulders', or any other body part. If anyone said such a thing, wiser and more experienced yogis would inform them — gently, I hope — that overemphasis on flexibility detracts from yoga's value as a practice for everyone regardless of body type or skill level.

The quote's implicit ageism is another reason it should go away. Yet the myth has some kernels of truth behind it which are worth exploring to understand the real importance of having a basic level of spinal mobility that will allow you to move with comfort and ease throughout your life.

The major chakras are along the spine

Postural yoga developed out of Indian tantric practices geared towards opening and aligning the chakras. While there are hundreds of chakras throughout the body, the most essential ones are six found along the spinal column and a seventh at the crown of the head.

The centrality of the chakras is why yoga emphasises the spine and why a saying that glorifies backbending can make its way into yoga circles more readily than a similar saying about other feats of flexibility. But overemphasis on flexibility is still misguided. Simple back-strengthening exercises such as cobra, locust, and bridge are sufficient for aligning the chakras; and they are also sufficient to ensure comfort and mobility for the majority of yoga students, who come to public classes for a variety of reasons and may or may not be interested in the workings of the subtle body.

Yoga and Pilates

The quote equating youth with spinal flexibility is sometimes attributed to Joseph Pilates, a man for whom I have great respect. I have taught yoga in Pilates studios, and one of the reasons I enjoy it is because Pilates practitioners tend to value functional mobility. His words were, “the only real guide to your true age lies not in years or how you THINK you feel but as you ACTUALLY are as infallibly indicated by the degree of natural and normal flexibility enjoyed by your spine throughout life.” While I think we should ditch talk of “true age” altogether as contributing to ageist bias, the key words are “natural and normal flexibility.” This can get lost in the translation from Pilates to yoga, where flexibility is often taken to extremes. Joseph Pilates did not perform poses that require extreme flexibility. One of the many benefits of his method is that, like yoga, it reverses the tendency of both the lumbar spine and the thoracic spine to become more curved over time, leading to a stooped posture.

I hope no one honestly thinks you are ageing unnaturally unless you can bend over backward and touch the soles of your feet to the top of your head, but it can come across that way when “natural and normal flexibility” gets turned into “you are only as young as your spine is flexible,” and then transferred from Pilates into yoga, where deep backbends are not uncommon.

What does ‘backbending’ really mean?

Backbends are one of the basic categories of yoga asanas. They could even be considered the most essential poses since they directly involve the six principal chakras along the spinal column. A proper understanding of what backbending means is at the very heart of yoga. While the backbends that help open and align the six major chakras (the seventh being more related to meditation than asana) involve some degree of spinal flexibility, very few people have extremely flexible spines, and no one needs to.

The lumbar spine, and especially the thoracic spine, are not built to move that much compared to a joint like the shoulder or the wrist. Granted, circus contortionists and the like develop tremendous flexibility in the spine, but that is a vanishingly small segment of humanity.

Even highly advanced yoga practitioners, capable of doing all the classic postures such as scorpion handstand, often have only moderate flexibility in the spine itself. Look carefully at their practice, and you will usually observe a deep but even opening throughout the whole front body, with the hip flexors and shoulders doing as much or more than the back itself.

The word ‘back’ in ‘backbend’ is best understood as a reference to the direction, not to the body part. You are not so much bending your back as bending toward the back.

Skilled teachers will often avoid saying ‘backbend’ and use terms like ‘heart opener’ or ‘back strengthener’, which are less likely to be misconstrued. When I teach or study yoga in Spanish, I am grateful that the term for backbend is ‘flexión hacia atrás’, literally, ‘bend towards the back’. Understood this way, the backbending family of poses includes not only those that strengthen the back and open the heart chakra but also those that relieve tightness in the hip flexors, which often goes overlooked as a cause of back pain and postural problems.

Finding the courage to open the heart

Backbends are the type of pose that have caused me the most anxiety. They can still scare me in a way handstands do not. I realised early in my practice this is because I’m fairly used to falling down but not that used to opening up.

It helps me to think of the mythology behind names of some fundamental backbends — bow and wheel, dhanurasana and urdhva dhanurasana in Sanskrit — and upward facing bow. I think of the great archer Arjuna’s hesitancy to pick up his bow and complete the task at hand in the Bhagavad Gita. In this great Hindu scripture, the hero is overcome by doubt and anxiety about the rightness of his actions just as he is about to go into battle. He was able to fulfill his sacred purpose only after being reminded of his own inner divinity. Sometimes I need to reflect on the many benefits yoga has brought me and the sheer joy I feel in my practice. This works best when my reflection is not clouded by language that causes anxiety around perceptions of age and flexibility. ॐ

Chris Livanos is a vinyasa instructor (ERYT-200) and a professor of South Asian Literature in Madison, Wisconsin, where he lives with his wife Michelle, their dog Rosie Mae and their guinea pig Lenny. Visit: panthayoga.com

COME AND PLAY YOGA

Learning to embed fun, play and exploration in our yoga practice… for all ages. **By Maria Oliver**

Being in play, being in the state of mind that says, 'I wonder what might happen if I tried this' and then not worrying or being afraid of the outcome, is a state of mind that can cope with the unexpected." - Michael Rosen, Book of Play.

Isn't life serious? We have to achieve and make progress all the time. I'm starting to notice this mindset in my children, too. They are both early teenagers, and I can see the danger of the joy being sucked out of everything they do for fun.

Who is getting picked for which sporting team? Who gets picked to be front and centre or have the main part in a performance? Who is placed at the back, out of the way? Who is substituted so they don't play much of a match?

I've had discussions with other parents at school about the anxiety of not being considered good enough by teachers and peers, and how this can lead to children deciding that they won't bother any more. Girls, in particular, drop out of sport due to low self-esteem.

Wouldn't it be brilliant if we could take a non-competitive approach to sport, too? Bear with me.

I'm not saying this because I'm a bitter parent making excuses for my children's lack of sporting ability. They are both athletic and talented at what they do. It amazes me, because my own childhood was very different.

I had crippling asthma. I was picked for the school swimming team, but no other team. I was uncoordinated and couldn't catch. I did gymnastics, but was not very flexible — I couldn't, and still can't, do the splits despite teaching Hanumanasana in my classes every now and then. If I went running on a cold day, the air would attack my lungs and give me chest spasms.

Yet I had a conversation with my son recently about athletics, as he'd just started doing it at school. "I liked athletics," I told him. "I wasn't picked to represent the school, but I liked it."

I surprised myself by saying this, as it was true, but I'd forgotten it.

I liked the high jump, the long jump, the hurdles, the javelin, the discus. I liked the techniques, and learning how to use different equipment. I liked how it made me feel, regardless of whether I was doing better than anyone else. I don't remember any teacher encouraging us to focus on the enjoyment of the activity for its own sake. We were always being judged on whether we'd win competitions for the school.

On the other hand, as an adult, I've

discovered so many events that are about sport for fun. I found in my mid 20s that I could run without having a massive asthma attack — I think that pranayama practices helped to strengthen my lungs and now I'm a slow but steady runner. I've done Cancer Research runs, triathlons where half the fun is making sure the transition from one event to the other is smooth, and Park Run, whose catch phrase is: 'It's a run, not a race'. The joy in many of these events is the community, possibly shared fundraising for a common cause, the fact you've chosen to get out there and do it. There are so many opportunities for adults to exercise for fun, to challenge yourself, to satisfy yourself, to focus on feeling good. Why can't that joy be instilled at school?

Which brings me onto yoga. When I attended my children's and teen yoga training courses, we were advised that when approaching schools, we should emphasise the non-competitive nature of yoga. That it can help those children who have already turned their backs on competitive sport. That it offers them some form of physical activity when they may have rejected all others. That it focuses on whether you feel good inside, rather than whether you are more bendy, or fast, or tactical than someone else. That if we just keep moving, whether it's competitively or not, it's so good for our mental health, too. I loved the playful approach on the courses I did, the emphasis on fun rather than perfect alignment.

Over the years, I've tried to bring more fun and enjoyment into my adults' classes as well. There are various yoga poses that I need to modify in order to demonstrate, having tight shoulders and hips and a stiff thoracic spine. You'd think that practicing yoga for years and teaching several times a week would have loosened me up a bit — and maybe it has — but I just can't do certain poses without belts or blocks. Or walls. Or chairs. I used to think that the goal of yoga was to work on my flexibility, to push myself to the edge and beyond. In the back of my mind were further goals: to make my right and left sides more symmetrical, cure all ills, iron out all the kinks and basically achieve physical perfection! Not only have I abandoned those 'goals', I've actually learnt to love my body more and be grateful for what it does for me.

> "Playing yoga is also about mindfulness: having a curiosity about what will happen when we explore a pose, and not being attached to the outcome."

So I can't bind when performing Ardha Matsyendrasana. But oh my goodness, the stretch I get in my latissimus dorsi when I internally rotate my front arm. Just by sending my hands in the vague direction towards each other gives the pose a different focus and er, twist.

I can't get my hips to the floor in Hanumanasana, but having let go of the notion of 'succeeding' in the pose, I now enjoy the feeling of deep opening in my hip sockets.

I can't do Gomukhasana arms without a belt, but I realised that my stiffer shoulder is more muscular, and works harder to serve me in everyday life.

So now, when I declare in class that we've been working towards a particular pose, and my adult class members groan because they think it's going to be too difficult — I invite them to play. Let's play around with this pose. Let's not get attached to any ideas of what success looks like. Let's not compete with each other. Let's not get annoyed with our bodies for not bending the way we want them to. Let's be curious about what happens next. Let's take time to explore. Let's stop if it doesn't feel right, or change it so that it does.

Let's play yoga. Playing yoga is also about mindfulness: having a curiosity about what will happen when we explore a pose, and not being attached to the outcome.

I hope that by sharing my love of yoga with class members young and old, that they can bring that joy and playfulness into other areas of their lives too. Yes, I love it when I see my children win. But isn't sport something that you...play? ॐ

Maria Oliver teaches yoga in Hertfordshire for children, adults, pregnant women and new mums and is the author of several yoga books for children. Find out more at: boxmooryoga.co.uk

Teaching what you practice

Yoga teaching from a place of authenticity is where it's at. By Paula Hines

A yoga practitioner who has practiced with me for a decade, recently told me about their experience of a drop-in class they'd attended which advertised itself as 'restorative yoga'. Though they liked the class they were disappointed that it turned out to be a slow vinyasa flow class.

Now, this could form part of a wider discussion about the rights and wrongs of categorising yoga into particular styles and how we all teach differently, etc. However, this was advertised and described as a restorative yoga class involving supported poses with props, yet it wasn't that at all in spite of props being available at the venue. Also, it was taught by the regular teacher (rather than a cover teacher) who, in a conversation afterwards, explained that the class they'd just offered was fairly typical of what the class was like each week and that they were "not really into props".

This story left me thinking a few things. The mention from the teacher of not being into using props implied to me that their own practice did not include props, or restorative yoga as we generally know it (i.e. incorporating the use of props to support the body in poses to facilitate deep rest).

If that were the case would they be the right teacher for a class advertised as 'restorative yoga'? Why not name and describe the class as it actually is to give those attending a clearer sense of what to expect?

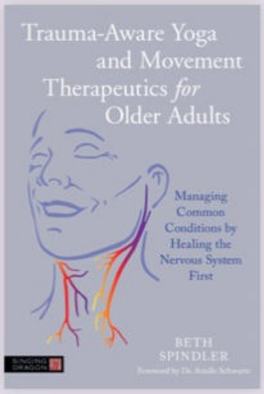
We all have different views, but my approach is to only teach or share what I practice. I don't think it's fair on the people in my classes or workshops otherwise. I also think it's unfair to not teach as advertised. I particularly feel it's important because the best teachings come from a place of embodiment. It might be tempting to leap on what appears to be popular at the moment if we think that's what people want right now, but if it's not familiar in your own body and mind, who is it ultimately benefitting?

I think others can tell when we aren't authentic. With this in mind, while I only share what I practice, I don't share everything I practice. I like to allow time for practices to integrate before I go on to share them.

If you teach, do you share what you practice, or what you do not, and why? ॐ

Paula Hines is a London-based yoga teacher and writer. Her book Rest + Calm (Green Tree, Bloomsbury Publishing) is out now in paperback, audiobook and Kindle/eBook. Find out more at: ucanyoga.co.uk

om books


Trauma-Aware Yoga and Movement Therapeutics for Older Adults
Managing Common Conditions by Healing the Nervous System First
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Trauma-Aware Yoga And Movement Therapeutics for Older Adults
Beth Spindler
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Singing Dragon

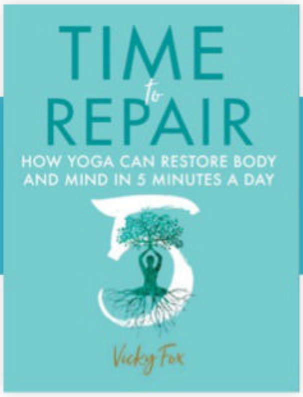
The movement and yoga therapeutics inside this book take a holistic approach to healing trauma alongside gentle practices to aid in managing symptoms in later life. Each chapter takes on a different condition or situation, explores how they can relate to trauma, and provides both the physical movement and the breathing exercises to address the issue. Complete with illustrations and adaptations, this accessible guide is ideal for teachers and therapists.

FURTHER READING

YOGA FOR STIFF BIRDS
MARION DEUCHARS

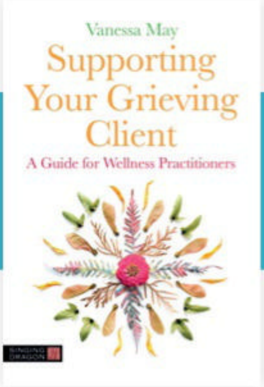
Yoga for Stiff Birds
Marion Deuchars
£10
Skittledog

Replacing traditional studio photography with charming illustrations, Marion Deuchars shares her passion for yoga via a ‘stiff bird’ character. The book sees the bird eased into every position (from the downward- facing dog to the tree) in just a few brush strokes. Both useful and inspiring, the art is designed to raise a smile among regular practitioners and yoga novices alike. Published in a beautiful, hardback format it’s a great gift for yogis everywhere.


TIME to REPAIR
HOW YOGA CAN RESTORE BODY AND MIND IN 5 MINUTES A DAY
Vicky Fox

Time To Repair: How Yoga Can Restore Body And Mind In 5 Minutes A Day
Vicky Fox
£14.99
Hammersmith Health Books

Drawing on her long experience of teaching yoga therapeutically, specialist yoga teacher Vicky Fox shows how to promote recovery and repair after illness, surgery or injury through building a personalised yoga practice that can take just five minutes a day. Find out how to get yoga’s powerful benefits in only five minutes, no matter how busy your day or how demanding your life, in this simple, illustrated book.


Vanessa May
Supporting Your Grieving Client
A Guide for Wellness Practitioners
SINGING DRAGON

Supporting Your Grieving Client: A Guide For Wellness Practitioners
Vanessa May
£24.99
Singing Dragon

For most people, grief is an inevitable part of life and if you're a wellness practitioner, then the likelihood is you will at some point work with a bereaved client. This book aims to help you feel prepared and confident in how you support your client. It will explain how loss and grief can place tremendous strain on the body and how it may manifest physically, mentally, and spiritually, whilst equipping you with the tools and resources you need to support your grieving client.

Our environmental challenge: a yogic perspective

Global warming and what we can do about it: one yogi's perspective. **By Gopala Amir Yaffa**

Here's the bad news. With increasingly toxic air, shorter winters, the Gulf Stream slowing, water-giving glaciers disappearing, and crop failures…it's time we act, urgently, now. Otherwise our habits will be the death of us, and our children.

But there's good news too. Humans are not evil. There is so much kindness, so much decency, creativity, and delight within us all. But we become evil when we become selfish, when we mistakenly think that our happiness is separate and more important than someone else's.

To me, it seems that all of the human-caused environmental issues are here because of selfishness and greed. We want more, we want bigger, we want newer, we want faster.

But perspective is always helpful. Bear in mind the concentration of wealth: the richest 1% grabbed nearly two-thirds of all new wealth created since 2020, worth $42 trillion, almost twice as much money as the bottom 99% of the world's population, according to Oxfam.

Still, climate change isn't someone else's problem. It's ours — all of us. We are the change…or not. Everything we've ever cared about is on the line in this single wrinkle in time.

Scientists say that if we won't make drastic changes and become carbon negative by 2030 we may reach a state where global warming and all of its disastrous environmental effects will become irreversible.

It's time, right now, to get emotional. Don't close your eyes. Lose the insistent need for comfort and for more, and find the light of caring, waking up your habit-changing willpower and advocacy.

Simple swaps

Start small, and go big. Think globally, and act locally.

Drinking out of hot plastic is bad for you. Do your best to avoid plastic altogether as much as you can. Shop in the local market. Bring your own jars as you buy in the bulk food store.

Bike, walk, bus, or carpool if you can. Or try to combine trips rather than going back and forth a lot. I know everyone says this, but really, it's more fun, too!

Eat less meat, or no meat. Please. We really don't need it. Why are you still willing for other beings to suffer and be murdered just for the pleasure of your taste buds? Really, anything that is not vegan is even tastier when we make it vegan. And it is guilt-free. In fact, it's healthier without it. We can let go of that and save our planet and a few billion animals' suffering while we are also stopping the production of methane, the most dangerous greenhouse gas.

Don't want to do this stuff? It's your choice. But climate change is not a choice. It is happening whether you like it or not. So we better make choices to stop it while we still have the capacity to choose.

Power your life with solar and wind, or offset. There are more and more options to do this for free, where you're just leasing the solar. Usually, you can pay a small additional fee even to the big electric corporations to utilise wind or solar in your power supply.

Most importantly: vote. Vote thinking about the future, about the next generations, the next seven generations, not just about immediate profit. The change needs to come from the top down as much as from the bottom up.

It's amazing how we all, nations and individuals, took part in a global action to stop the Covid-19 pandemic while doing nearly nothing about the environmental change happening; changes that are becoming irreversible unless we take immediate action, and that are detrimental to both humans and all species on earth.

Natural environment

As humans, every aspect of our life is reliant on the natural environment. This includes the foods we eat, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the clothes we wear and the products that are made and sold to create jobs and drive the economy.

A healthy and stable climate is our most precious natural resource.

Just a few years ago, governments in the UK, Australia and the USA all claimed that they simply could not stop the economy for anything, including the environment. But with Covid-19, we have seen how they are more than able to do just that and pour a lot of money into supporting those who struggle as a result — though this has now indebted future generations, which means economically sustainable solutions are equally important.

Global warming stresses ecosystems through temperature rises, water shortages, increased fire threats, drought, weed and pest invasions, intense storm damage and salt invasion, just to name a few. One in six species is reportedly at risk of extinction because of climate change.

Why is it still allowed that we can produce plastic? We all know how harmful it is to the earth and all animals. We can make the same products from plant starch.

Why are we still allowing for fossil fuels to be used? The technology to efficiently and cleanly replace this is already here.

Why are we still growing billions of methane-producing animals a year for human consumption? We know that it is wrong on the moral and environmental levels, and alternatives that don't scream are abundant.

We know of so many beautiful ways to draw CO2 out of the atmosphere (such as planting trees, propagating seaweed in the oceans, and even some clean machines), but governments are still using our money to fund wars. Why? Why? Why?

I don't know why. Maybe we are all too oblivious. Maybe we are all sleepwalking, being led like sheep to the slaughter. Oh we really need to wake up! We need to wake up our brothers and sisters, our communities, our governments, the United Nations.

Some recent polls show that over 50% of young people believe that there is nothing they can do to improve the state of the environment, the one that our generation has created. So yes: we need to wake up the next generation too!

We need to join hands and hearts and voices and speak up together for this urgent change that is desperately needed. Are you with me?

Environmental yoga games

I teach yoga to young people, and I use yoga to inspire them to make changes, inwardly and also out in the world. Here are a couple of techniques I use to help them feel how important it is to make the changes in our lives that will help our beautiful blue-green-planet. These techniques are suitable for all, young and old.

Plant trees. It solves everything!

The trees hold the water in the soil with their roots. The forest keeps the surrounding area cool with its shade. The forest provides homes for many animals. Forests clean and enrich the air we breathe. Their leaves and needles take in carbon dioxide and give out oxygen through the tree's bark.

In pairs, one partner is a seed in child's pose and the other is the gardener. Using their imagination, the gardener waters the seed and cares for the soil. The seed person stays relaxed now as the gardener sculpts them gradually to sprout and grow, first into a small plant, and then gradually into a tree. The seed does not help, they simply stay in the pose that the gardener moves them into. The gardeners can continue to help stabilise the trees by pressing their foot into the earth (this helps in finding more stability in tree pose). Then switch roles!

Shop sustainably: eco yoga shopping game

We vote with how we spend our money. If we stop buying plastic or other products that pollute the earth or cause rainforest destruction or water pollution, companies will stop making them.

Standing in a circle, the first participant says: "I went to the shop and I bought ______ (fill in the blank with a sustainable choice)" and makes a yoga pose for it. The second participant then says: "I went to the shop and I bought..." first saying and acting in a yoga pose what the person before them did and then adding their own. The game continues as each participant in their turn repeats all the items and poses that were said before and adds their own. It's a memory game where you get to do lots of yoga along the way! If it is a small group, you can do a few rounds, adding more and more items and poses to your list. You can also play where everyone repeats all of the items and poses together — not as much memory needed here by each individual and everyone gets to do more poses.Yay!

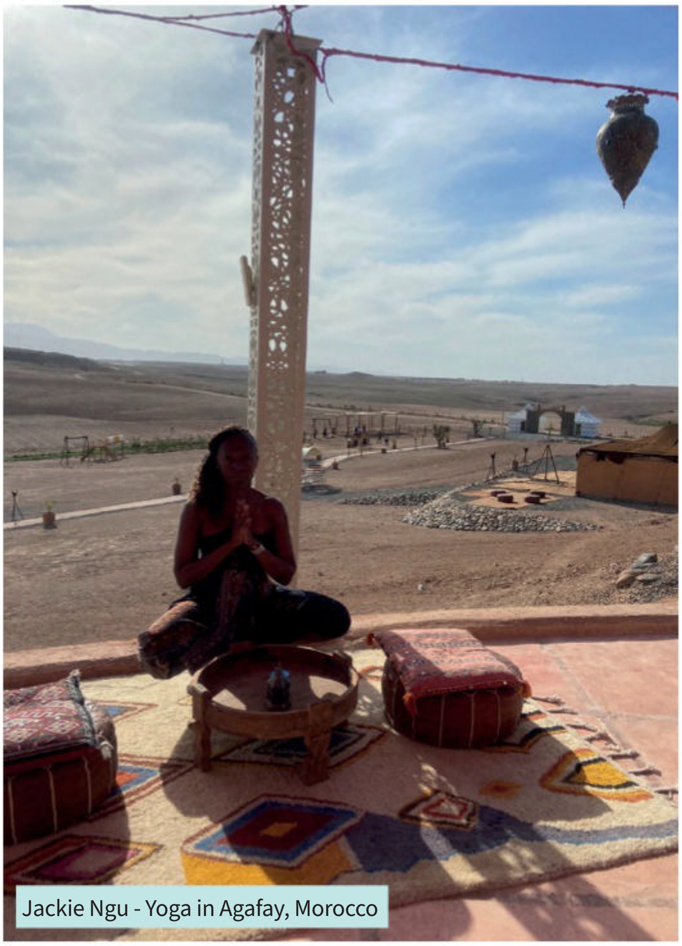
Gopala Amir Yaffa is co-founder and wizard at Rainbow Yoga Training, which provides life-changing yoga education around the world, while making it a better place for future generations. Find out more at: rainbowyogatraining.com

Yoga is for every body

Your pictures. Your community

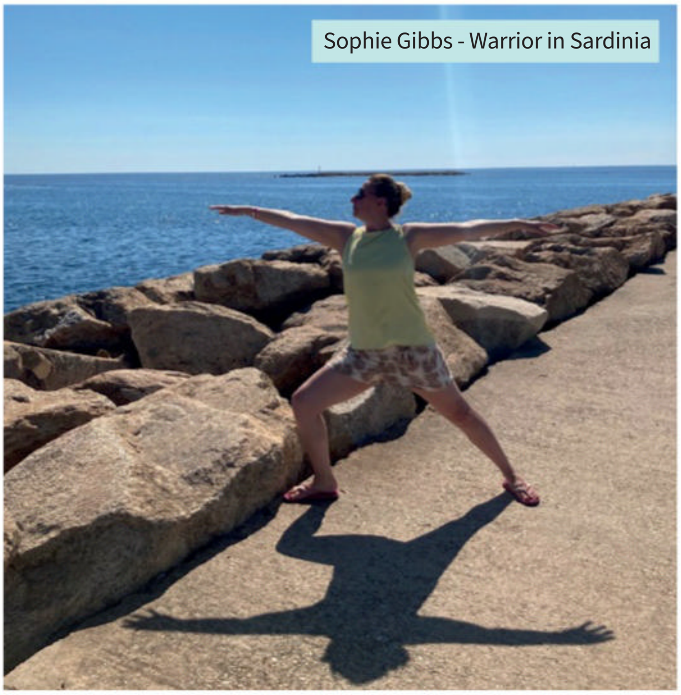
George Skuodas from Yoga Guild at 3 Cliffs Bay, Gower, Wales

Polly Chilton in Hengistbury Head, Christchurch


Jackie Ngu - Yoga in Agafay, Morocco

Shirley Loughlin in the Caingorms, Scotland

Penny Letchford in the Brecon Beacons


Sophie Gibbs - Warrior in Sardinia

We want your photos!

Send us happy shots, fun pics, great asana (or bad asana!), big smiley faces, anything at all – and see them in OM Magazine. It doesn't have to be you doing a yoga pose either. We want to see your yoga life: a pre-class group hug, a cup of tea after class, what you got up to at the weekend, send them all via email to: jane@primeimpact.co.uk

om travel

Awe-inspiring retreats and ideas for yoga explorers

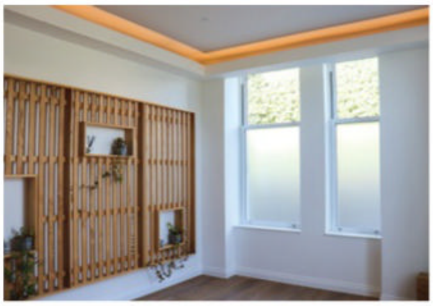
Autumn YOGA RETREAT

A Cornish yoga retreat on the edge of the world

Housel Bay Hotel, a Cornish hotel on the southernmost tip of the UK, is taking bookings for its Autumn yoga retreat this year, following its recent Spring retreat, hosted by Kate Batchelor from the Yoga Batch.

"Housel Bay Hotel is the perfect place to get people away from their everyday stresses and in a space where they can focus fully on their physical and mental wellbeing," she says.

Perched on the clifftop above Housel Bay, the hotel is on the frontier between the rugged Cornish coastline and the Celtic Sea.



Situated on the AONB Lizard Peninsula, guests on the retreat can take advantage of the South West Coast Path running directly in front of the hotel, the low-tide-accessible beach at the foot of the cliffs as well as the nearby Lizard Lighthouse or popular Kynance Cove.

A destination focused on slow-paced adventure, returning to nature and with a wonderfully isolated location free from the bustle, everyday stresses — and, occasionally, phone signal — it's the perfect setting for those in need of a refresh.

A small, intimate retreat, spaces are strictly limited so book early. All levels of ability welcome.

The Autumn Yoga & Wellbeing Retreat takes place from 6–8 October, 2023. Find out more at: houselbay.com/events/yoga-retreats

An invitation to Essex

The Glass House Retreat is the new kid on the block in the county's health and wellness scene

There are so many reasons to love Essex. Apart from the fact that OM magazine originates from this beautiful county (and any popular or notorious shows that you may have seen on television), it's also home to the splendid new Glass House Retreat.

Now one of the UK's leading wellness and detox destinations, it houses some of the country's top wellness talent — from trainers and therapists to the fabulously talented head chef, Miguel Gouveia and his team, who create incredible healthy vegan, great-tasting menus.

The meditation pod outside is a must, and there's a new yoga studio that's just been built, so plenty of options and choices here for the soul seeker. You'll also find special themed retreat weekends, such as a Skincare Retreat and the Wim Hof Method Weekend, so there's always lots going on.

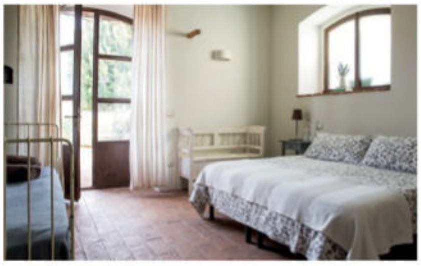
Aside from dedicated programmes for fitness, weight loss, detox and general health and wellbeing, you'll also enjoy the exquisite spa, indoor pool, sauna, steam, fitness classes and outdoor natural swimming pond — everything you need to leave with a spring in your step this spring! ॐ

Visit: glasshouseretreat.co.uk

RETREAT DATES
14-21 May,
3-10 June,
4-11 September,
2023

Rest & Regeneration

Rediscover your shine with Shine Retreats' Regeneration Retreat



Shine Retreats has announced its upcoming schedule for its 2023 Regeneration Retreats in Tuscany, Italy. Set in a beautiful farmhouse in the idyllic Italian countryside on the border of Tuscany and Umbria, the seven-day Regeneration Retreats will see guests embark on a week-long journey of recovery with a five-day fast, daily treatments and guidance from a team of dedicated health professionals, plus plenty of time for rest and recuperation in a breathtaking setting.

Over the course of the week, a team of health specialists will work closely with each guest to improve their overall health alongside the power of the Regeneration Diet created by Michelle McKenzie. This five-day wholefood diet provides all the health benefits of fasting, whilst being fed three precise nutrient-rich and balanced meals a day, such as grain-free porridge made from almond flour, chia seeds, flax seed, hulled hemp seeds and berries or roasted butternut squash and beetroot salad.

With a focus on regeneration, the fasting kickstarts cellular autophagy (the clearing of damaged cells), with the body literally cleansing on a cellular level. When done for a prolonged period, this fast has the benefit of switching on your body's ability to generate new stem cells. These can replace any cell in the body, which is when healing can really begin. The retreats promise to leave guests with the knowledge and confidence to repeat the fast at home, thus continuing to build on the body's own natural healing ability. ॐ

Prices for Shine's Regeneration Retreat start from £1,700pp. For further details visit: retreats.shineholistic.co.uk/shine-retreats/the-regeneration-retreat-with-michelle-mckenzie

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DATES
15-21 July, 2023
Ourika Valley, Morocco

Body Positive YOGA RETREAT

Yoga with a Moroccan twist on retreat with body positive yoga teacher and coach Donna Noble

Yoga teacher and body positive coach Donna Noble will be leading a summer retreat at a beautiful private estate nestled in olive groves in the Atlas Mountains this summer.

Overlooked by the snow-capped Mount Toubka, this stylish retreat location includes nine suites, a spectacular pool, tennis courts, a spa and a yoga shala. A labyrinth of pathways leads you through beautiful gardens filled with fragrant flowers and sculptural cacti.

The hospitality of the Berber people is world-renowned: whether you'd like to experience a traditional hammam, enjoy a tea ceremony or sample the famous Moroccan tagine, this retreat will be an immersion into Berber culture while being nurtured in luxurious comfort.

The purpose-built yoga shala looks out onto the mountains with a stunning garden laid out in front of you — a wonderful place to practice yoga over a week, with students on a journey of transformation, discovery, and empowerment.

Your host, Donna Noble, is an accomplished yoga teacher, writer, speaker and coach, who is also on a mission to get as many people as she can to try yoga — no matter your age, experience level, gender, ethnicity or shape. "This retreat will be a fun and immersive experience for everyone and the relaxed plan means you can do as little or as much as you like."

She says all classes will be fun, safe and judgement-free and have a body positive focus, so the poses are adapted for your unique body. Expect a variety of yoga styles including vinyasa, yin and aqua yoga. "Progressive sequences of postures are combined with the best coaching and wellbeing techniques so that you can cultivate self-acceptance and learn to trust your body in a safe judgement-free environment."

Expect talks on body image, self-love, how to eliminate stress, and to be authentically you, while seeing the world from an inside-out perspective so that you can connect with the essence of who you are.

Between classes spend time relaxing by the stunning pool, enjoying Moroccan-French fusion food or book yourself into the spa. Midweek, there's a day off so you can take an early morning walk up into the foothills of the Atlas.

The retreat includes six nights' accommodation, twice daily yoga classes (with one day off mid-week), brunch, dinner, snacks and soft drinks. Flights, hammams and hikes are extra.

The location is run on solar power and the local Berber team have been employed at the venue for many years. The owners have also donated some of their land to the local community who manage a project supplying Yves St Laurent with flowers for their fragrances and all guest travel is offset by the retreat host company, Reclaim Yourself. ॐ

Visit: reclaimyourself.co.uk/our-holidays/morocco-yoga-retreat

Yoga & wild swimming IN CORNWALL

Love your yoga and now want to experience the wild swimming craze too? Look no further than Cornwall's Fistral Beach Hotel and Spa, where you can experience the ultimate pampering yoga weekend and get your feet wet in the water under expert eyes. By Lauren Bloxham

Imagine emerging from savasana and returning to your room…the sound of Fistral beach's big waves crashing on the rocks outside… a freestanding bathtub overlooking the bay and a range of beautifully crafted natural bath products to indulge in…this is a yoga break to soothe the soul and indulge all the senses.

Fistral Beach Hotel and Spa perches at the southern end of Fistral Beach, an iconic surf beach. As the waves roll in, many of the rooms, including the hotel's Dune Restaurant and Bay Bar, have front row seats to all that unfurls on the beach below and in the water. From surfers to swimmers, paddleboarders and walkers, there is always something to look at on the beach — and the hotel provides a fabulous adult-only base to escape to.

The Yoga & Wild Swimming weekend offers the perfect balance of group dynamic, camaraderie, and anonymity, great for those who are looking for a weekend escape with friends that offers some adventure and focus but prefer a lighter approach than the traditional yoga retreat experience. Neatly gathered at points of practice, with three yoga sessions across the weekend and a fantastic morning of wild swimming in between, yoga teachers Jane Forster, Kate Jones and swimming coach 'Cornish Kelpie' Sarah Walker host a mixture of Sivananda, Dru and restorative yoga, and offer an exhilarating dip in the crystal-clear waters of the Atlantic.

Yoga for everyone

Yoga is held within the fitness suite at the back of the hotel. The room is private and feels contained, and what it lacks in character and views, is made up for by the fairy lights, candles and music offered by the teachers. The restorative session is warm and nurturing, with equipment such as bolsters, eye pillows, blankets and belts provided. There's a sense of ease, with time to chat and slowly saunter away for drinks and food at your own pace. The advantage of being in the hotel is, of course, having the bar and restaurant there at the times that you need them. Whilst yoga retreat purists might baulk at the idea of cocktails after yoga, the frayed and weary among us, who simply need a weekend away with the added benefit of a touch of yoga, will be relieved! Having a varied menu to choose from offers something for everyone, and friends gathering together will have the advantage of enjoying quality time without the sense of obligation towards the group dynamic that more typical 'retreat' weekends might lend themselves to.

With an opening Friday evening Sivananda class, Jane Forster holds space for playful and challenging yoga poses including headstands and crow pose. It's an ambitious opening, but is brought with good humour and with plenty of modifications for the total beginner. Her

relaxed yet powerful Sivananda style class galvanises the group and everyone is encouraged to do their own thing, skilfully supported by the teacher whose guidance and confidence ensures the group is both supported and free to explore. Her knowledge of anatomy clearly shines through, and a simple forward fold becomes a deep hamstring stretch with her gently offered yet precision adjustments.

A dip in the ocean

Wild swimming is led by the 'Cornish Kelpie' Sarah Walker on Saturday morning, whose passion for the water and dedication to a safe and enjoyable experience for all, is evident. She kits everyone up with swim floats, hats, and towels, and although there are no wetsuits in sight, even first-time dippers find their stride in the rockpools and shallows of the beach below.

Sarah Walker's knowledge of the science of cold-water immersion and her encouraging, caring way of leading the group into nine-degree waves, make the experience feel both safe and adventurous. The mix of excitement, fear and sheer exhilaration is wild; it's a 10-minute dip that wakes the senses and stirs the soul. It's a potent reminder that there's more to life, quite literally within our bodies, as the group emerges grinning ear to ear, cold, euphoric and some, ready to go again! Thankfully our guide knows the limits of cold-water exposure and leads the group back to the warmth of the fire in the Bay Bar where hot chocolate and biscuits await, as well as time to chat off the buzz, discussing both scientific and anecdotal evidence around the benefits of cold-water exposure. The experience is a must and summoning the bravery to get in is made easier by the group dynamic; missing it would be missing out on a true celebration of the elements here at Fistral.

Relaxation time

With plenty of down time, Fistral Beach Hotel and Spa also offers a great experience for those looking for some deep relaxation — the sauna, steam room, jacuzzi and vitality pool are open to guests all day and spa treatments range from body work and facials to GAIA journeys and tailored treatments.

Removing yourself out of the spa and into a restorative yoga session is utter bliss and topping it off with a chef's special and recommended wine pairing feels truly indulgent, it does not disappoint.

The Dune Restaurant offers a laid back luxe, beachside dining experience. Dining in yoga gear alongside 'date nighters' and couples on their weekend away feels comfortable and not out of place. Staff are friendly and not overly attentive and whilst the space is adult-only, there is a healthy mix of couples, friends, individuals, and family groups. With Dick Pearce wooden belly boards adorning the walls, a clear nod to the surf culture that's embedded itself at Fistral beach, The Dune Restaurant clearly draws strength from its ocean offerings. Fish lovers will be spoilt for choice, whilst vegetarians and meat eaters are amply catered for. All food is seasonal and freshly prepared.

Sunday morning yoga

Sunday mornings Dru Yoga session with Kate Jones is a delight and possibly the highlight of the yoga offering. A thoughtfully put together class which feels accessible, energising, and intelligent in its approach. A flow which moves sequentially around the body, encouraging softness of joints and movement which is innately attuned to the flow of the ocean and the environment it's delivered within. Yoga in its truest sense, the class feels unifying, both internally and within the group, a perfect set up for breakfast with a view before heading home.

The Fistral Beach Hotel and Spa Yoga & Wild Swimming experience really is a celebration of life, from movement to relaxation, food and wine, to the phenomenal setting on the beach. It's a great place to gather, or to escape to, for groups and individuals alike.

Yoga & Wild Swimming WEEKEND

The next yoga retreats start: Friday 6th October, 2023 and Friday 20th October, 2023. Enjoy two night's accommodation at Fistral Beach Hotel and Spa, exclusively for adults (single occupancy available); 3 yoga sessions over the weekend; Wild Swim session with coach followed by blankets and hot chocolate to warm up; breakfast in Dune Restaurant each morning; three-course meal both evenings (B&B option available); complimentary membership to Fistral Spa and gym facilities for duration of the break; 10% off spa treatments (pre-booking recommended); complimentary access to fitness classes — from £450 for two nights.

Visit: fistralbeachhotel.co.uk
@fistralbeachhotel

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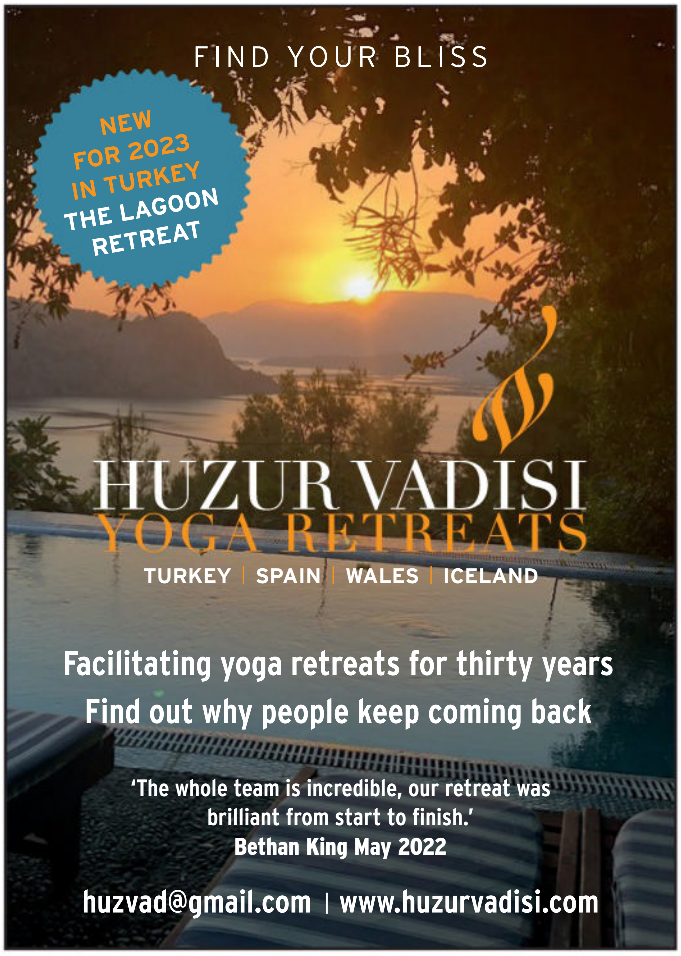
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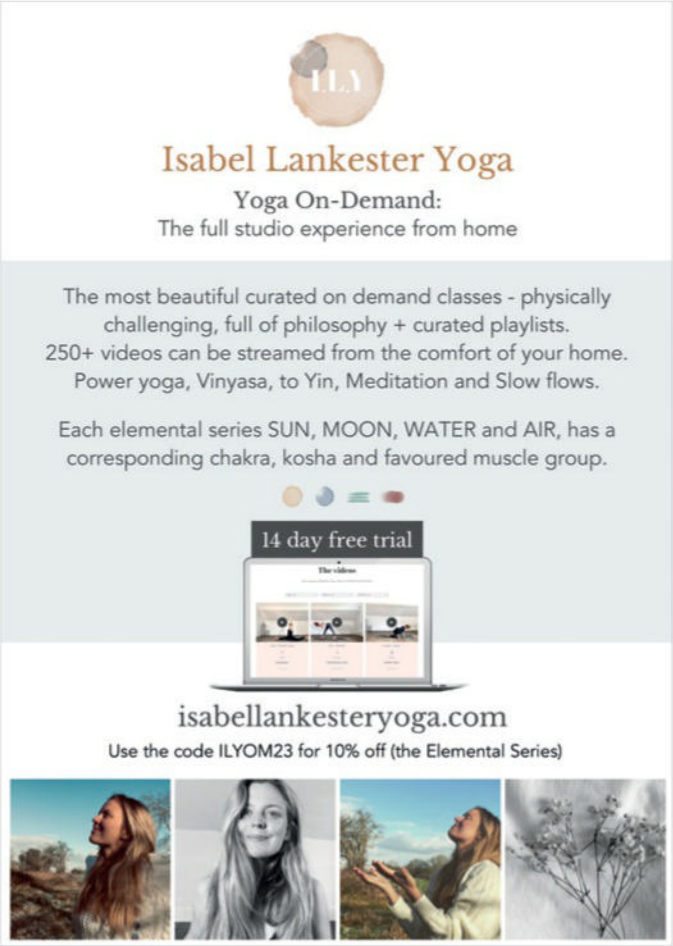
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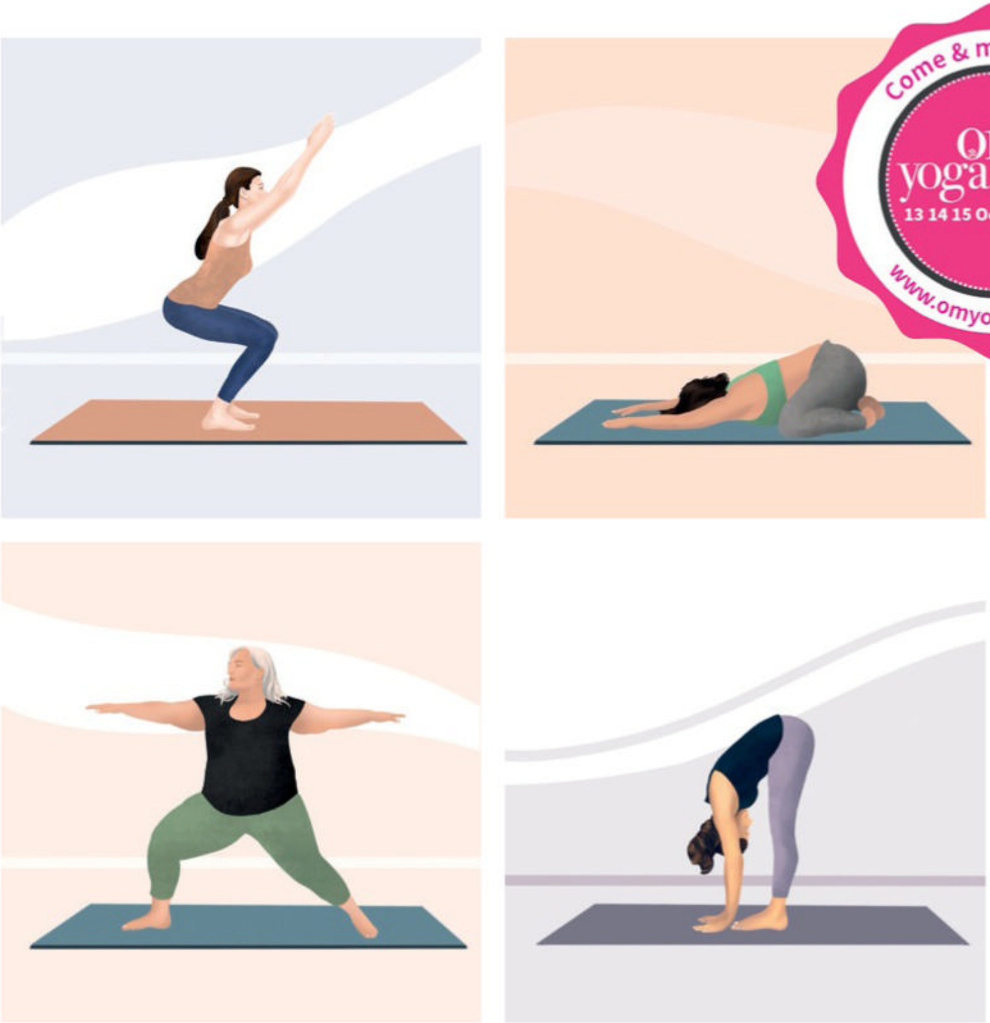

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Yoga gymnastics

Must we be so flexible to do yoga? The damaging effects of conflating yoga with gymnastics.

By Sarah Highfield

If you were to put the word 'yoga' into a word association game, for many, the next word would be 'flexibility.'

The link between yoga and flexibility is commonly more dominant than the one with mindfulness, or awareness, or peacefulness, or whatever else you think makes more sense.

In fact, whenever people find out that I am a yoga teacher, the first thing they often say is: "You must be really flexible."

Yet, any seasoned yogi knows that flexibility is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to what yoga is and offers.

It is a widespread misconception that yoga is just about improving flexibility, and this is backed up by never-ending yoga media and content that is centred and fixated around how to stretch deeper or excessively contort your body.

The narrative being built is one questioning whether you are flexible enough to do it, and if not, here are some tips on how to improve your flexibility.

Understandably, this is not always the case, but I feel that it increasingly is, especially where image-heavy, fast, and popular media is involved.

Moreover, conflating yoga with what is literally gymnastics is damaging, ableist, and further propagates the notion that yoga is exclusive and only for a certain type of person or lifestyle.

I wonder if a lot of people will miss out on all the wonderful benefits of yoga because they have been led to believe that only 'the flexible' can do yoga or they are simply put off and alienated by photos of people in hyper-extended poses.

Sure, increasing flexibility is an element of yoga, but if what we see around us is to be believed, it appears that yoga is only worth doing (and impressive) when the yogi performing could also pass for a circus acrobat.

Furthermore, why is there such strong push to be extremely flexible anyway? Is it even healthy after a certain point? No. And, is anyone really any closer to enlightenment or inner peace because they are more flexible? Again, no.

Personally, I would like to see greater attention placed on the more important reasons to do yoga, especially the internal ones and the ones that really matter in the long-term.

Emphasis should also be on more written and visual reminders that yoga is accessible for people of all shapes, sizes, ages, and abilities, because representation is important and is what will get more people involved. ॐ

Sarah Highfield is a yoga teacher, three-time OM cover model and regular contributor. Visit: yogagise.com or connect on Instagram @Yogagise

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